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THE  
PSYCHOLOGY OF PEOPLES  
ITS INFLUENCE  
ON THEIR EVOLUTION

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# THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PEOPLES

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has hitherto been the same for all peoples—Symptoms of decadence presented by some Latin peoples—Development of egoism—Diminution of initiative and will power—Lowering of character and morality—The youth of the present day—Probable influence of Socialism—Its dangers and its strength—How it will cause the civilisations that undergo it to return to wholly barbarous forms of evolution—The peoples among whom it will be able to triumph.

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## INTRODUCTION

### MODERN IDEAS ON SOCIAL EQUALITY AND THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASIS OF HISTORY

Origin and development of the idea of equality—The consequences it has had—The price already paid for its application—Its influence at the present day on the masses—The problems examined in the present work—An inquiry into the principal factors of the general evolution of peoples—Is this evolution determined by institutions?—The elements of each civilisation: institutions, arts, creeds, etc., and whether they have not certain psychological foundations peculiar to each people?—The element of chance in history and its permanent laws.

THE civilisation of a people is based on a small number of fundamental ideas, which determine its institutions, its literature and its arts. These ideas come very slowly into being, and they are also very slow to disappear. Long after their erroneous nature has become clear to cultivated minds, they remain indisputable truths for the masses, and continue to exert their influence on the rank and file of a nation. It is difficult to obtain recognition for a new idea, but it is no less difficult to discredit an idea that has

long been generally accepted. Humanity has always been exceedingly loth to abandon its decayed ideas and its moribund gods.

It is barely a century and a half ago that certain philosophers, who, it should be remarked, were very ignorant of the primitive history of man, of the variations of his mental constitution and of the laws of heredity, propounded the idea of the equality of individuals and races.

This idea, which would naturally be most attractive to the masses, ended by firmly implanting itself in their mind, and speedily bore fruit. It has shaken the foundation of the old societies, given birth to the most formidable of revolutions, and thrown the Western world into a series of convulsions, the end of which it is impossible to foresee.

Doubtless certain of the inequalities among individuals and races were too apparent to be seriously disputed; but people found it easy to persuade themselves that these inequalities were merely the outcome of differences of education, that all men are born equally intelligent and good, and that the sole responsibility for their perversion lies with the institutions they live under. This being the case the remedy was simple in the extreme: all that had to be done was

to reform the institutions and to give every man an identical education. It is in this way that institutions and education have ended by becoming the great panaceas of modern democrats, the means of remedying inequalities which clash with the immortal principles that are the only divinities that survive to-day.

And yet science, as it has progressed, has proved the vanity of the theories of equality and shown that the mental gulf created by the past between individuals and races can only be filled up by the slowly accumulating action of heredity. Modern psychology, together with the stern lessons of experience, has demonstrated that the institutions and the education which suit some individuals and some races are most harmful to others. But when ideas are once in circulation it is not in the power of philosophers to destroy them when they arrive at the conviction that they are erroneous. Like a swollen stream that has overflown its banks, the idea continues its destructive progress with which nothing can interfere.

There is no psychologist, no traveller, no fairly intelligent statesman who is not aware how erroneous is this chimerical notion of the equality of men, which has thrown the world into confusion, brought

about in Europe a gigantic revolution, involved America in the sanguinary War of Succession, and landed all the French colonies in a state of lamentable decadence; yet in spite of this knowledge they are few indeed who venture to combat this notion.

Moreover the idea of equality, far from being on the decline, continues to make headway. It is in the name of this idea that socialism, which seems destined to enslave before long the majority of Western peoples, pretends to ensure their welfare. It is in its name that the modern woman, forgetting the deep-lying mental differences that separate her from man, claims the same rights and the same education as man, and will end, if she be triumphant, in making of the European a nomad without a home or a family.

The masses scarcely trouble themselves about the political and social upheavals to which these levelling principles have given rise or about the far graver events they have yet to bring forth, and the statesmen of the present day are in power too short a time for them to be more heedful. Moreover public opinion has become the sovereign authority, and it would be impossible not to bow to it.

The only real measure of the social importance of an idea is the influence it exerts on men's minds.



The degree of truth or error it contains is only of interest from a philosophic point of view. When an idea has come to be a sentiment with the masses, all the consequences it involves must be undergone in succession.

We see then that it is by means of education and institutions that the modern dream of equality endeavours to seek realisation. It is in their name that, reforming the unjust laws of nature, we attempt to cast in the same mould the intelligences of the negroes of the Martinique, of the Guadeloupe and of the Senegal, those of the Arabs of Algeria and finally those of the Asiatics. The chimera is doubtless quite unrealisable, but experience alone can show the danger of chimeras. Reason is incapable of transforming men's convictions.

The object of this work is to describe the psychological characteristics which constitute the soul of races, and to show how the history of a people and its civilisation are determined by these characteristics. Neglecting details, or only considering them so far as they are indispensable to the proof of the principles advanced, we shall examine the formation and mental constitution of the historic races, that is of the races

artificially formed in historic times by the chances of conquest, immigration and political changes, and we shall endeavour to demonstrate that their history is determined by their mental constitution. We shall note the degree of fixity or variability of the characteristics of races. We shall try to find out whether individuals and peoples tend towards equality or, on the contrary, towards greater and greater differentiation. We shall then examine whether the elements composing a civilisation, its arts, its institutions, its beliefs, are not direct manifestations of the soul of races, and whether in consequence it is not impossible that they should pass from one people to another. We shall conclude by attempting to determine what are the necessities under the influence of which civilisations decay and die out. We have dealt at length with the problems in question in various works on the civilisations of the East. This short volume should be regarded as a brief synthesis.

The point that has remained most clearly fixed in my mind, after long journeys through the most varied countries, is that each people possesses a mental constitution as unaltering as its anatomical characteristics, a constitution which is the source of its sentiments, thoughts, institutions, beliefs and arts.

Tocqueville and other illustrious thinkers have imagined that they have discovered in the institutions of the various peoples the cause of their evolution. I, on the contrary, am persuaded and hope to prove, while choosing my examples from the countries studied by Tocqueville, that institutions are of extremely slight importance as regards the evolution of civilisation. They are most often effects and but very rarely causes.

The history of peoples is determined, no doubt, by very different factors. It is full of particular cases, of accidents which have taken place but which might not have taken place. Side by side, however, with these chances, with these accidental circumstances, there are great permanent laws which govern the general course of each civilisation. The mental constitution of races proceeds from the most general, the most primordial of these permanent laws. The life of a people, its institutions, beliefs, and arts are but the visible expression of its invisible soul. For a people to transform its institutions, beliefs, and arts it must first transform its soul; to enable it to bequeath its civilisation to another people, it would be necessary that it should be able to bequeath its soul. Doubtless this is not what history teaches, but we



shall easily show that in recording contrary assertions it has allowed itself to be misled by vain appearances.

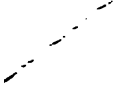
The reformers who have followed one another for a century past have endeavoured to change everything: Gods, the earth and men; but their efforts have been wholly unavailing so far as regards the century-old characteristics of the souls of races which time has established.

The conception of the irreducible differences which separate human beings is entirely contrary to the ideas of modern socialists, but it is not the teachings of science that could induce the apostles of a new dogma to renounce their illusory doctrines. Their efforts are a new phase of the eternal crusade of humanity in quest of happiness, that treasure of Hesperides for which the peoples have been searching from the dawn of history onwards. The dream of equality would perhaps avail as much as the old illusions which cradled us in the past, were it not that it is destined to be shattered at an early date on the immovable rock of natural inequalities. Together with old age and death, these inequalities are a part of those apparent iniquities of which nature is full and to which man must submit.



**BOOK I**

*THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS  
OF RACES*



## BOOK I

### *THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RACES*

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#### CHAPTER I

##### THE SOUL OF RACES

How the naturalists classify species—Application of their methods to man—Defective side of the classifications of the human races at present in vogue—Foundations of a psychological description—The average types of the races—How they may be established by observation—The psychological factors which determine the average type of a race—The influence of ancestors and that of the immediate parents—Common psychological groundwork possessed by all the individuals of a race—Immense influence of bygone generations on the present generation—Mathematical reasons for this influence—How the collective soul has spread from the family to the village, from the city to the surrounding district—Advantages and dangers of the conception of the city—Circumstances under which the formation of the collective soul is impossible—Example of Italy—How the natural races have given way to the historic races.

NATURALISTS base the classification of species on the observation of certain anatomical characteristics regularly and constantly reproduced

by heredity. We are aware to-day that these characteristics are transformed by the hereditary accumulation of imperceptible changes. Still, if attention be confined to the comparatively short period covered by history, the species may be said to be invariable.

Applied to man, the methods of classification of the naturalists have allowed of the determining of a certain number of perfectly distinct types. By the aid of clearly defined anatomical characteristics, such as the colour of the skin, and the shape and volume of the skull, it has been possible to establish that the human race comprises several species which are quite distinct and probably of very different origin. In the eyes of the scientific men who are respectful of religious traditions, these species are simply races. However, as has been rightly observed, "if the Negro and the Caucasian were snails, all zoologists would affirm unanimously that they constitute excellent species, which could never have descended from the same couple from which they had gradually come to differ."

These anatomical characteristics, those at least of them that can be traced by our analysis, only allow of very summary general divisions. Their divergencies are only perceptible in the case of the most distinct

human species ; of the white and yellow races, or the negroes for example. Peoples, however, that closely resemble one another as regards their physique, may be widely different as regards their modes of feeling and acting, and in consequence as regards their civilisations, beliefs, and arts. Is it possible, for instance, to class in one and the same group a Spaniard, an Englishman, and an Arab? Are not the mental differences that exist between them apparent to everybody, and to be detected throughout their history?

In the absence of anatomical characteristics, it has been proposed to base the classification of certain peoples on various elements, such as language, belief, and political organisation ; but this mode of classification will scarcely bear examination.

The elements of classification which anatomy, languages, environment, or political organisation are incapable of furnishing are supplied by psychology, which shows that behind the institutions, arts, beliefs, and political upheavals of each people, lie certain moral and intellectual characteristics that determine its evolution. It is the whole of these characteristics that form what may be called the soul of a race.

Each race possesses a mental constitution as un-



THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PEOPLES:

varying as its anatomical constitution. There seems to be no doubt that the former corresponds to a certain special structure of the brain, but as science is not sufficiently advanced as yet to acquaint us with this structure, we cannot have recourse to it as a basis of classification. Moreover, a knowledge of it would in no way modify the description of the mental constitution of which it is the determining factor and which is revealed to us by observation.

The moral and intellectual characteristics, whose association forms the soul of a people, represent the synthesis of its entire past, the inheritance of all its ancestors, the motives of its conduct. They appear to be very variable in individuals of the same race, but observation proves that the majority of the individuals of a given race always possess a certain number of common psychological characteristics, which are as stable as the anatomical characteristics that allow of the classification of species, while, like these latter characteristics, the psychological characteristics are regularly and constantly reproduced by heredity.

This aggregate of psychological elements observable in all the individuals of a race constitutes what may rightly be called the national character. Together

they form the average type which permits of a people being defined. A thousand Frenchmen, Englishmen, or Chinamen, chosen at hazard, offer notable differences amongst themselves, but nevertheless, owing to racial heredity, they possess common characteristics which allow of the determining of an ideal type of the Frenchman, the Englishman, and the Chinaman analogous to the ideal type which the naturalist presents when he describes in a general manner the dog or the horse. Applicable to the different varieties of dogs or horses, such a description can only include the characteristics common to them all and not those which enable their numerous individual specimens to be distinguished.

Provided a race be sufficiently ancient, and in consequence homogeneous, its average type is established with sufficient clearness for it to be readily noted by the observer.

When we visit a foreign people the only characteristics that can arrest our attention are precisely those that are common to all the inhabitants of the country we are travelling through, since they are the only characteristics that are constantly repeated. The individual characteristics, being seldom repeated, escape us, and before long we not only distinguish



at first sight between an Englishman, an Italian, or a Spaniard, but we are perfectly able to ascribe to them certain moral and intellectual characteristics, which are the very fundamental characteristics that we referred to above. An Englishman or a Gascon, an inhabitant of Normandy or Flanders, corresponds to a type of which we have a perfectly clear idea and of which we can easily give a description. Applied to an isolated individual, the description may seem very inadequate and sometimes inexact; applied to the majority of the individuals of one of these races it will depict them perfectly. The ~~unconscious process~~ by which we arrive at an idea of the physical and mental type of a people is absolutely identical in its essence with the method by which a naturalist classifies species.

This identity of the mental constitution of the majority of the individuals of a ~~race~~ is due to very simple physiological reasons. Each individual is the product not merely of his immediate parents but also of his race, that is of the entire series of his ascendants. A learned economist, M. Cheysson, has calculated that in France, supposing there to be three generations in a century, each of us would have in his veins the blood of at least twenty millions of the

people living in the year 1000. "In consequence all the inhabitants of a given locality, of a given district, necessarily possess common ancestors, are moulded of the same clay, bear the same impress, and they are all brought back unceasingly to the average type by this long and heavy chain, of which they are merely the last links. We are the children at once of our parents and our race. Our country is our second mother for physiological and hereditary as well as sentimental reasons."

If it be wished to state in precise language the influences which govern the individual and direct his conduct, they may be said to be of three kinds. The first and certainly the most important is the influence of ancestors; the second, the influence of the immediate parents; the third, commonly supposed to be the most powerful, but nevertheless the weakest, is the influence of environment. The influence of environment, including in its scope the various physical and moral influences to which the individual is subjected during his life, and particularly during his education, produces but very slight variations. The influences of environment only become really effective when heredity has caused their action to be continued in the same direction during a long period.

Do what he may, then, the individual is always and above all the representative of his race. The totality of the ideas and sentiments that are, as it were, the birthright of all the individuals of a given country form the soul of the race. Invisible in its essence, this soul is very visible in its effects, since it determines in reality the entire evolution of a people.

A race may be compared to the totality of the cells that constitute a living being. The existence of these milliards of cells is very short, whereas the existence of the being formed by their union is relatively very long ; they possess at once their own personal life and a collective life, that of the being of which they form the substance. In the same way each individual of a race has a very short individual life and a very long collective life. This latter life is that of the race of which he is sprung, which he helps to perpetuate, and on which he is always dependent.

A race is to be regarded as a permanent being that is independent of time. This permanent being is composed of the long succession of the dead who were its ancestors, as well as of the living individuals who constitute it at a given moment. To understand the true signification of a race, it must be considered

with regard both to its past and its future. The dead, besides being infinitely more numerous than the living, are infinitely more powerful. They reign over the vast domain of the unconscious, that invisible domain which exerts its sway over all the manifestations of the intelligence and of character. A people is guided far more by its dead than by its living members. It is by its dead, and by its dead alone, that a race is founded. Century after century our departed ancestors have fashioned our ideas and sentiments, and in consequence all the motives of our conduct. The generations that have passed away do not bequeath us their physical constitution merely; they also bequeath us their thoughts. The dead are the only undisputed masters of the living. We bear the burden of their mistakes, we reap the reward of their virtues.

The formation of the mental constitution of a people does not demand, as does the creation of animal species, those geological periods whose immense duration defies calculation. Still, the time it demands is considerable. To create in such a people as the French, even to the comparatively slight extent accomplished as yet, the community of sentiments and thought that forms its soul, more than ten cen-

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PEOPLES:

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turies have been necessary.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps the most important result of the French Revolution was to hasten this formation by greatly promoting the breaking up of the minor nationalities: Picards, Flemish, Burgundians, Gascons, Bretons, men of Provence, &c., into which France was formerly divided. Doubtless the unification is far from being complete, and it is more especially because we are composed of too varied races, and in consequence have too different ideas and sentiments, that we are the victims of dissensions unknown to more homogeneous peoples—to the English, for example. In

<sup>1</sup> This lapse of time, long as it may seem from the point of view of history, is in reality comparatively short, since it only represents thirty generations. The reason why so relatively brief an interval is sufficient to fix certain characteristics is that when a cause acts for some length of time in the same direction, it speedily produces very considerable effects. Mathematics teach us that when a cause persistently produces the same effect, the causes increase in arithmetical progression (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, &c.), and the effects in geometrical progression (2, 4, 8, 16, 32, &c.). *The causes are the logarithms of the effects.* In the famous problem of the doubling of the grains of wheat on the squares of a chessboard, the successive numbers of the square are the logarithms of the number of grains of wheat. Similarly in the case of money invested at compound interest, the number of years is the logarithm of the accumulated capital. It is for reasons of this order that the majority of social phenomena may be expressed by very nearly similar geometrical curves. In another work I arrived at the conclusion that these curves might be expressed analytically by the equation of the parabola or the hyperbola. My learned friend, M. Cheysson, is of opinion that they are better represented, as a rule, by an exponential equation.



England, the Saxon, the Norman, and the Ancient Briton have ended by forming, as the result of fusion, a very homogeneous type, and everything in consequence is homogeneous in the domain of conduct. Thanks to this fusion, the English have acquired in a high degree the three fundamental bases of the soul of a people: common sentiments, common interests, and common beliefs. When a nation has reached this stage, there is an instinctive agreement amongst all its members on all great questions, and it ceases to be a prey to serious dissensions.

This community of sentiments, ideas, beliefs, and interests, created by slow, hereditary accumulations, gives a high degree of identity and fixity to the mental constitution of a people. It was the cause of the greatness of Rome in ancient times, and at the present day it is the source of the greatness of England. The moment it disappears, peoples begin to break up. The rôle of Rome was at an end when it ceased to possess it.

The congeries of sentiments, ideas, traditions, and beliefs which form the soul of a collectivity of men has always existed more or less in the case of all peoples and at all ages, but its progressive extension has been slowly accomplished. Restricted at first

to the family and gradually extended to the village, the city, and the province, the collective soul has only spread to all the inhabitants of a country in comparatively modern times. It was only when this last result had been achieved, that the notion of a native country, as we understand it to-day, came into existence. The notion is not possible until the national soul is formed. The Greeks never got beyond the notion of the city, and their cities were always at war, because in point of fact they were always very foreign to one another. For two thousand years past India has known no other unity than the village, and it is for this reason that for two thousand years the country has always been subject to foreign rulers, whose ephemeral empires have come to an end as easily as they were formed.

Weak though it be from the point of view of military strength, the conception of the city as the sole native country has, on the contrary, always been very effective from the point of view of the development of civilisation. Though less spacious than the soul of the native country, the soul of the city has at times been more fruitful. Athens in ancient times, Florence and Venice during the Middle Ages, show us the degree of civilisation which may be attained to by small agglomerations of men.

When small cities or small provinces have lived an independent life for a considerable length of time, they end by possessing so stable a soul that its fusion with those of neighbouring cities and provinces, with a view to the formation of a national soul, becomes almost impossible. Such a fusion, even if it be capable of being brought about, as happens when the elements brought together are not too dissimilar, is never the work of a day, but only that of centuries. To achieve such a work, a Richelieu or a Bismarck is necessary, but they only bring it to a head, when it has been long in elaboration. It is possible indeed for a country, as has happened in the case of Italy, to arrive suddenly, as the result of exceptional circumstances, at forming a single State, but it would be a mistake to suppose that it thus acquires simultaneously a national soul. It is clear to me that in Italy there are Piedmontese, Sicilians, Venetians, Romans, etc., but it is not clear as yet that there are Italians.

At the present day, whatever be the race under consideration, whether it be homogeneous or not, by the mere fact that it is civilised and for a long while past has played its part in history, it must always be regarded as an artificial and not as a natural race.



Natural races are scarcely to be met with except among savages. It is only among savages that it is possible to find peoples of absolute racial purity. At the present day the majority of civilised races are merely *historical races*.

We are not concerned here with the origin of races. That they have been formed by nature or by history is beyond our purpose. What interests us is their characteristics such as they have been constituted by a long past. Kept up during centuries by the same conditions of existence and accumulated by heredity, these characteristics have ended by acquiring a high degree of fixity and by determining the type of each people.

## CHAPTER II

### THE LIMITS OF THE VARIABILITY OF THE CHARACTER OF RACES

The variability of the character of races, and not its fixity, constitutes the apparent rule—Reasons for this appearance—Invariability of the fundamental characteristics and variability of the secondary characteristics—Analogies between the psychological characteristics and the irreducible and modifiable characteristics of the animal species—It is only environment, circumstances, and education that influence the accessory psychological characteristics—The possibilities of character—Examples furnished by the different periods—The men of the Terror—What they became at different periods—How national characteristics endure in spite of revolutions—Various examples—Conclusion.

IT is only by a careful study of the evolution of civilisations that the fixity of the mental constitution of races is brought home to the observer. At first sight it is variability and not fixity that appears to be the general rule. The history of peoples might induce the belief that their soul undergoes on occasion very rapid and very far-reaching transformations. Does there not seem, for example,

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of an animal, or the gardener who modifies the aspect of a plant to such a degree that it is unrecognisable to the unpractised eye, has not affected to the slightest extent the fundamental characteristics of the species; all they have done has been to influence the accessory characteristics. In spite of all the artifices employed, the fundamental characteristics always tend to reappear with each new generation.

The mental constitution possesses fundamental characteristics as immutable as the anatomical characteristics of animal species, but it also possesses accessory characteristics that are easily modified. It is these latter characteristics that may easily be changed by environment, circumstances, education and various other factors.

It must also be remembered, and the point is essential, that we all possess in our mental constitution certain possibilities of character, which circumstances do not always provide with an opportunity of manifesting themselves. When they come to the front, a new and more or less ephemeral personality at once takes shape. It is in this way that at times of great political or religious crisis, momentary changes of character are observed, which would seem to indicate that manners, ideas, conduct, everything

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in short, had undergone a change. Everything has indeed changed, as happens to the tranquil surface of a lake lashed by a storm; but it is rare that the change is lasting.

It is in consequence of these possibilities of character put in operation by certain exceptional events, that the actors in great religious and political crises appear to us to be made of superior stuff to ourselves, to be a sort of giants of whom we are the degenerate sons. In reality they were men like ourselves, in whom circumstances had given free rein to possibilities of character possessed by all of us. Take, for example, the "giants of the Convention" who held Europe in check, and sent their adversaries to the guillotine for a mere contradiction. At bottom they were respectable, pacific citizens like ourselves, who in ordinary times would probably have led the most tranquil and retired existence in their studies or behind their counters. Extraordinary events caused the vibration of certain of their brain cells which under usual conditions would not have been called into activity, and they developed into those colossal figures, whom posterity is at a loss to understand. Born a hundred years later, Robespierre would doubtless have been an upright magis-



trate on excellent terms with the local priest; Fouquier-Tinville a magistrate possessing, perhaps in rather a higher degree than his colleagues, the harshness and supercilious manners of his profession, but greatly appreciated for his zeal in bringing delinquents to book; Saint-Just would have made an excellent schoolmaster, esteemed by his chiefs and very proud of the decoration he would certainly have ended by obtaining. To remove all doubt as to the accuracy of these previsions it is sufficient to note what Napoleon accomplished with such of the ferocious Terrorists as had not the time to cut off mutually each others' heads. The majority of them became staid officials, tax collectors, magistrates or prefects. The waves stirred up by the storm of which we spoke above had calmed down, and the troubled lake had recovered its tranquil surface.

Even in the most troubled periods, in those which produce the strangest variations of personality, it is easy to trace the fundamental characteristics of the race beneath the new developments. Was there much difference in reality between the centralised, dictatorial and despotic *régime* of our strict Jacobins and the centralised, dictatorial and despotic *régime* to which fifteen centuries of monarchy had

accustomed the French nation? All the revolutions of the Latin peoples result in this obstinately recurring *régime*, in this incurable need of being governed, because it represents a sort of synthesis of the instincts of the race. It was not solely the glamour attaching to his victories that enabled Bonaparte to make himself master of France. When he transformed the republic into a dictatorship, the hereditary instincts of the race manifested themselves day by day with greater intensity; indeed, in the absence of an officer of genius, any adventurer might have filled his part. Fifty years later the heir to his name had only to show himself to obtain the votes of a people tired of liberty and eager for servitude. It was not the 18th Brumaire that established the fortunes of Napoleon, but the soul of his race which he was about to trample beneath his iron heel.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "At his first gesture," writes Taine, "the French bowed in obedience, and they persisted in their attitude, as if it were their natural condition; the humble, the soldiers, and the peasants, with animal fidelity; the great, the dignitaries and functionaries, with Byzantine servility. The Republicans offered no resistance; on the contrary, it was among them that he found the best instruments of his reign, his Senators, Deputies, State Councillors, judges and officials of every rank. Beneath their talk of liberty and equality, he had been quick to divine their dictatorial instincts, their need of commanding, of surpassing their fellows, and even, subsidiarily and in addition, their

The influence exerted on men by environment appears so great, because it operates on the accessory and transitory elements, or on those possibilities of character of which we have been speaking. In reality, the changes are not very profound. The mildest man, driven by hunger, attains to a degree of ferocity which renders him capable of every crime, and even leads him occasionally to devour his fellow man. Will it be said on this account that his habitual character has definitely changed?

If the conditions of civilisation procure a minority extreme wealth and develop in its members all the vices which are the inevitable consequence of luxury; if they arouse violent desires in the remainder of the population without supplying the means of satisfying them, the result will be general discontent and unrest, which will influence conduct and provoke upheavals of every kind, but amid this discontent and these upheavals the fundamental characteristics of the race will always show themselves. In the past, the English-born inhabitants of the United States, when

hungering after wealth and pleasure. Between the delegate of the Committee of Public Safety and the Minister, the Prefect or the sub-Prefect of the Empire, the difference is slight. The man is the same and it is only the costume that is altered: the carmagnole has been exchanged for an embroidered uniform."

engaged in civil war, displayed the same indomitable energy as they exhibit to-day in founding towns, universities, and manufactories. The national character has not been modified ; it is merely the objects that bring it into play that have changed.

When examining in succession the various factors capable of influencing the mental constitution of peoples, we always observe that their influence is exerted on the accessory and transitory sides of character, while they scarcely affect the fundamental elements, or only affect them as the result of very slow hereditary accumulations.

We do not conclude from what precedes that the psychological characteristics of peoples are invariable, but only that they possess, like the anatomical characteristics, a high degree of fixity. It is on account of this fixity that the soul of races changes so slowly during the course of ages.

## CHAPTER III

### THE PSYCHOLOGICAL HIERARCHY OF RACES

Psychological classification is based, as are anatomical classifications, on the determination of a small number of irreducible and fundamental characteristics—Psychological classification of the human races—The primitive races—The inferior races—The average races—The superior races—The psychological elements the grouping of which allows of this classification—The elements which are of the most importance—Character—Morality—The intellectual qualities are modifiable by education—The qualities appertaining to character are irreducible and constitute the unvarying element in each people—Their rôle in history—Why it is impossible for different races to understand and influence one another—The reasons why it is impossible for an inferior people to adopt a superior civilisation.

WHEN the grounds are examined, in a work on natural history, of the classification of species, it is at once observed that the irreducible, and in consequence the fundamental characteristics, which allow of the determination of each species, are very few in number. Their enumeration always occupies but a few lines.



The reason is that the naturalist only concerns himself with the unvarying characteristics, and pays no heed to the transitory characteristics. Moreover these fundamental characteristics have as their inevitable consequence an entire series of other characteristics.

The case is the same with the psychological characteristics of races. If details be gone into, innumerable slight divergencies are found to exist between different peoples and different individuals. On the other hand, if only the fundamental characteristics be considered, they are seen to be very few in number for each people. It is only by examples—we shall shortly adduce examples that are highly characteristic—that it is possible to show clearly the influence of this small number of fundamental characteristics on the life of peoples.

The only way to set forth the bases of a psychological classification of races being to study in detail the psychology of the different peoples, a task that would demand in itself several volumes, we shall confine ourselves to indicating their main lines.

If only their general psychological characteristics be considered, the human races may be divided into four groups: (1) the primitive races; (2) the inferior

racés; (3) the average racés; (4) the superior racés.

The primitive racés are those in which no trace of culture is met with. They have remained in that state bordering on animality which was traversed by our ancestors of the age of stone instruments. The Fuegians and the aboriginal Australians are examples in point.

Above the primitive racés are found the inferior racés, represented more especially by the negroes. They are capable of attaining to the rudiments of civilisation, but to the rudiments only. They have never been able to get beyond quite barbarian forms of civilisation, even when chance has made them the heirs, as at Saint Domingo, of superior civilisations.

Among the average racés, we shall place the Chinese, the Japanese, the Mongolians, and the Semitic peoples. In the case of the Assyrians, the Mongolians, the Chinese, and the Arabs, they have created high types of civilisation, which only the European peoples have been able to surpass.

Only the Indo-European peoples can be classed among the superior racés. Both in antiquity, at the epoch of the Greeks and Romans, and in modern

times they alone have been capable of great inventions in the arts, the sciences, and industry. It is to them that is due the high level reached by civilisation at the present day. It is they who have discovered steam and electricity. The least developed of these superior races, the Hindoos in particular, have risen to a level in the arts, letters, and philosophy to which the Mongolians, the Chinese, or the Semites have never been able to attain.

No confusion is possible between the four great divisions we have just enumerated. The mental abyss that separates them is evident. It is only when it is desired to subdivide these groups that the difficulties begin. An Englishman, a Spaniard, or a Russian belong all of them to the division of superior peoples, but it is a matter of common knowledge that the differences between them are very great.

To determine these differences with precision, it would be necessary to take each people separately, and to describe its character. This is the course we shall shortly follow in the case of two of these peoples in order to give an application of the method and to show the importance of its consequences.

For the moment, we can only indicate very



summarily the nature of the principal psychological elements which allow of the differentiation of races.

Among the primitive and inferior races—and to find such races it is not necessary to go to the pure savages, since the lowest strata of the European societies are homologous with the primitive men—a greater or less incapacity to reason is always met with, an incapacity, that is, to associate in the brain, with a view to compare them and to perceiving their analogies and differences, the ideas produced by past sensations or the words that are their signs, and the ideas produced by present sensations. There results from this incapacity to reason a great credulity and a complete absence of the critical spirit. In the case of the superior being, on the contrary, the capacity of associating ideas, and of drawing conclusions from their association is very great, while the critical spirit and precision are highly developed.

The inferior races further display but an infinitesimal power of attention and reflection; they possess the spirit of imitation in a high degree, the habit of drawing inaccurate general conditions from particular cases, a feeble capacity for observation and for deriving useful results from their observations, an extreme mobility of character and a very notable lack

## 2. THE INSTINCT OF PEOPLES:

is ~~instinct~~. The ~~instinct~~ of the moment is the ~~instinct~~ ~~instinct~~ ~~instinct~~—the type of the primitive ~~instinct~~—they are ~~instinct~~ to sell their birthrights for mess of ~~instinct~~. When man is capable of weighing his future against his immediate interest, of giving himself a goal and pursuing it with perseverance, he has realised a considerable progress.

The incapacity to foresee the distant consequences of acts and the tendency to be guided solely by the instinct of the moment condemns the individual as well as the race to remain for ever in a very inferior state. It is only in proportion as they are able to dominate their instincts, in proportion, that is, as they acquire will power and in consequence empire over the senses, that peoples can understand the importance of discipline, the necessity of sacrificing themselves to an ideal and of raising themselves to a civilised state. Were it required to measure by a single standard the social level of peoples in history, I should be disposed to take as standard the degree of their aptitude in dominating their reflex impulses. The Romans in antiquity, the Anglo-Americans in modern times represent the peoples who have possessed this quality in the highest measure. It has largely contributed to assure their greatness.



It is by their general grouping and their respective development that the various psychological elements just enumerated form the mental constitutions which allow of the classification of individuals and races.

Certain of these psychological elements appertain to character, and others to the intelligence.

The superior races are distinguished from the inferior races by their character as well as by their intelligence, but it is more especially by their character that the superior races are distinguished from one another. This point has considerable social importance, and it deserves to be clearly established.

Character is formed by the combination, in varying proportions, of the different elements which psychologists are accustomed at the present day to designate by the name of sentiments. Among the sentiments which play the most important part must more especially be noted perseverance, energy, and the power of self-control, faculties more or less dependent on the will. We would also mention morality among the fundamental elements of character, although it is the synthesis of somewhat complex sentiments. By morality we mean hereditary respect for the rules on which the existence of a society is based. To possess

morality means, for a people, to have certain fixed rules of conduct and not to depart from them. As these rules vary with time and place, morality appears in consequence to be a very variable matter, and it is so in fact ; but for a given people, at a given moment, it ought to be quite invariable. The offspring of character, and in nowise of the intelligence, it is not solidly constituted until it has become hereditary, and, in consequence, unconscious. In a general way the greatness of peoples depends in a large measure on the level of their morality.

The intellectual qualities are susceptible of being slightly modified by education ; those of character almost wholly escape its influence. When education does affect them, it is only in the case of neutral natures, whose will is almost non-existent, and who are ready in consequence to follow whatever impulse may be given them. These neutral natures are met with in individuals, but very rarely in an entire people, or, should they be thus observed, it is only in times of extreme decadence.

The discoveries of the intelligence are easily transmitted from one people to another. The transmission of the qualities appertaining to character is impossible. They are the irreducible fundamental

elements which allow of the differentiation of the mental constitutions of the superior peoples. The discoveries due to the intelligence are the common patrimony of humanity; qualities or defects of character constitute the exclusive patrimony of each people, they are the firm rock which the waters must wash day by day for centuries before they can even wear away its external asperities. They are the equivalent of the irreducible element of the species, of the fins of fish, of the beak of the bird, of the tooth of the carnivorous animal.

The character of a people and not its intelligence determines its historical evolution, and governs its destiny. It is always to be met with behind the apparent fantasies of that most powerless chance, that most fictitious Providence, that very real Fate which, according to varying beliefs, guides the actions of men.

The influence of character is sovereign in the life of peoples, whereas that of the intelligence is in truth very feeble. The Romans of the decadence possessed an intelligence far more refined than that of their rude ancestors, but they had lost the qualities of character of the latter; the perseverance, the energy, the invincible tenacity, the capacity to sacrifice them-



selves to an ideal, the inviolable respect for the laws which had made the greatness of their forefathers. It is due to their character that sixty thousand English are able to maintain beneath their yoke two hundred and fifty millions of Hindoos, many of whom are at least their equals in intelligence, while a few surpass them immensely as regards their artistic taste and the depth of their philosophic views. It is in consequence of their character that they are the masters of the most gigantic colonial empire known to history. It is character and not intelligence that goes to the founding of societies, religions, and empires. Character it is that enables peoples to feel and act. They have never derived much advantage from too great a desire to reason and think.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The extreme weakness and slight practical interest of the works of professional psychologists is more especially to be ascribed to the fact that they have confined themselves almost exclusively to the study of the intelligence, and have almost entirely neglected that of character. M. Paulhan in his interesting *Essai sur les caractères*, and M. Ribot in a few passages, unfortunately only too short, are almost the only psychologists I can recall who have pointed out the importance of character, and noted that it forms the true basis of the mental constitution. "The intelligence," the learned professor of the College of France rightly declares, "is only an accessory form of the mental evolution. The fundamental type is character, which the intelligence rather tends to destroy when it is too developed."

It is to the study of character that attention must be directed, as I am attempting to show in these pages, when it is desired to describe the comparative psychology of peoples. It would be difficult to understand

It is the mental constitution of races that determines their conception of the world and of life, and, in consequence, their conduct. We shall shortly support this statement by important examples. Impressed in a certain manner by external things, the individual feels, thinks, and acts in a very different manner from that in which will feel, think, and act those who possess a different mental constitution. The consequence is that it is impossible that mental constitutions, constructed as they are on very varied lines, should arrive at mutual comprehension. The century-old conflicts of races are the result more particularly of the incompatibility of their respective characters. It is impossible to arrive at any understanding of history unless it be continually borne in mind that different races cannot feel, think, or act in the same manner, and that, in consequence, they cannot comprehend one another. Doubtless the different peoples have in their languages common

that a science so important—for history and politics are its derivations—should never have been made the object of study, were it not for the knowledge that it can be acquired neither in laboratories nor in books, but only in the course of long travel. There is no indication moreover that it is on the eve of being taken up by the professional psychologists, who at the present day are more and more abandoning what used to be their domain, and confining themselves to anatomical and psychological researches.



words which they imagine are synonymous, but these common words arouse entirely dissimilar sensations, ideas, and modes of thought in those who hear them uttered. It is necessary to have lived among peoples whose mental constitution differs to a sensible degree from our own, even though frequenting amongst them only such individuals as speak our language and have received our education, to appreciate the depth of the gulf that separates the thought of the various peoples. It is possible to obtain some idea of this phenomenon, without having recourse to extensive travel, by observing the great mental separation that exists between the civilised man and woman, even when the latter is highly educated. The man and the woman may have common interests and sentiments, but never like chains of thought. They might converse with one another for centuries without understanding one another, because they are constructed on lines too different to allow of their being impressed in the same manner by external things. The difference in their logical faculties is alone sufficient to create between them an insuperable gulf.

This abyss between the mental constitution of the different races explains how it is that the superior

peoples have never been able to impose their civilisation on inferior peoples. The idea, still so widespread, that education can achieve this result, is one of the most baneful illusions that the theoreticians of pure reason have ever brought into existence. Thanks to the memory possessed by the most inferior beings—a privilege in nowise confined to man—it is doubtless possible for education to impart to an individual somewhat low down in the human scale the totality of the notions possessed by a European. A negro or a Japanese may easily take a university degree or become a lawyer; the sort of varnish he thus acquires is however quite superficial, and has no influence on his mental constitution. What no education can give him, because they are created by heredity alone, are the forms of thought, the logic, and above all the character of the Western man. Our negro or our Japanese may accumulate all possible certificates without ever attaining to the level of the average European. It is easy to give him in ten years the culture of a well-educated Englishman. To make a real Englishman of him, that is to say a man acting as an Englishman would act in the different circumstances of life, a thousand years would scarcely be sufficient. It is only in appearance that a people

suddenly transforms its language, its constitution, its beliefs or its arts. For such changes to be really accomplished, it would be necessary that it should be able to transform its soul.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE PROGRESSIVE DIFFERENTIATION OF INDIVIDUALS AND RACES

The inequality between the different individuals of a race is greater in proportion to the superiority of the race—Mental equality of all the individuals of inferior races—To appreciate the differences that separate races, the superior individuals of each people and not its average representatives must be compared—The progress of civilisation tends towards a greater and greater differentiation of individuals and races—Consequences of this differentiation—The psychological reasons which prevent its becoming too considerable—The individuals of the superior races are highly differentiated as regards their intelligence, and very slightly so as regards their character—How heredity constantly tends to reduce individual superiorities to the average type of the race—Anatomical observations confirming the progressive psychological differentiation of races, individuals, and sexes.

THE superior races are not distinguished from the inferior races solely by their psychological and anatomical characteristics. A further distinction is supplied by the diversity of the elements of which they are composed. All the individuals of the inferior races, even as regards those of different sex, are on

sensibly the same mental level. They all of them resemble one another, and they are thus a perfect exemplification of the equality dreamed of by our modern socialists. In the case of the superior races, on the contrary, the intellectual inequality of the individuals and the sexes is the law.

For this reason, in order to appreciate the differences that separate peoples, their superior representatives—when they possess such—and not their inferior must be compared. Hindoos, Chinese, and Europeans are but slightly differentiated intellectually so far as their average representatives are concerned. On the other hand, when their superior representatives are compared their differentiation is found to be considerable.

With the progress of civilisation, not only races, but also the individuals of each race—those at least of the superior races—tend to become more and more differentiated. The result of modern civilisation, clashing with our dreams of equality, is not to render men more and more equal intellectually, but, on the contrary, more and more different.

One of the principal consequences of civilisation is, on the one hand, to differentiate races by the daily increasing intellectual exertion it demands of peoples who have attained to a high degree of culture, and



on the other to widen the distinctions between the various grades of which each civilised people is composed.

The conditions of modern industrial evolution condemn the inferior classes of civilised peoples to a highly specialised labour which, far from increasing their intelligence, merely tends to lessen it. A hundred years ago, a workman was a veritable artist capable of executing all the details of any piece of mechanism—of a watch for example. To-day, he is a mere toiler, who never produces more than one speciality, who spends his life boring the same holes, polishing the same portion of an article, driving the same machine. The result is that the atrophy of his intelligence is soon complete. The manufacturer or the engineer who directs the workman is obliged, on the contrary, owing to the pressure of discoveries and competition, to possess far more numerous acquirements and much more enterprise and invention than his predecessor of a century back. His brain is constantly exercised, and, undergoing the law which applies to all organs in such a case, becomes more and more developed.

Tocqueville had already pointed out this progressive differentiation of the social grades at a period when

industry was far from having attained to the degree of development it has reached to-day. "In proportion as the principle of the division of labour receives more thorough application, the workman becomes weaker, of narrower intelligence, and more dependent, Art progresses, the artisan falls back. Every day the difference between the employer and the workman increases."

At the present day, a superior people may be considered, from the intellectual point of view, to constitute a sort of pyramid of steps, the majority of which are formed by the masses of the population, the upper steps by the intelligent classes,<sup>1</sup> and the point of the pyramid by a very small *élite* of men of science, inventors, artists, and writers, an exceedingly restricted group as compared with the rest of the population, but

<sup>1</sup> I say intelligent without adding cultured. It is a characteristic error of the Latin peoples to believe that intelligence and culture go together. Culture merely implies the possession of a certain amount of memory, but to acquire it no judgment, reflection, initiative or invention are necessary. Persons of very restricted intelligence are often met with among those who have passed examinations, while it is quite as common to find persons of a very slight degree of culture who are highly intelligent. The upper portion of our pyramid would be formed then by elements taken from all classes. All the professions contain a very small number of notable intelligences. Still it appears probable, in virtue of the laws of heredity, that what are known as the superior social classes contain the greater number, and it is doubtless herein that their superiority lies.

the only group that determines the rank of a country in the intellectual scale of civilisation. It would suffice for it to disappear for all that constitutes the glory of a nation to disappear at the same time. "Were France, as Saint-Simon has rightly observed, to lose suddenly its fifty leading men of science, its fifty leading artists, its fifty leading manufacturers, its fifty leading agriculturists, the nation would become a body without a soul, it would be decapitated. If on the contrary it were to lose all its officials, the French would grieve at the loss because they are soft-hearted, but the country would sustain very little harm."

With the progress of civilisation, the differentiation between the extreme grades of a population proceeds with great rapidity; it even tends, on occasion, to increase in what mathematicians call geometrical progression. It would suffice in consequence, if certain effects of heredity did not intervene, to allow time to act to see the superior grades of a population separated intellectually from the inferior grades by a distance as great as that which separates the white man from the negro, or even the negro from the monkey.

For several reasons, however, this intellectual differ-



entiation of the social grades, considerable though it becomes, is not accomplished with the rapidity that might be possible theoretically. In the first place, the differentiation is almost confined to the intelligence, and affects the character to a very slight extent ; and we know that it is the character and not the intelligence that plays the fundamental part in the life of peoples. In the second place, the masses are tending at the present day, in virtue of their organisation and discipline, to become all-powerful. Their hatred of intellectual superiority being evident, it is probable that every intellectual aristocracy is destined to be violently destroyed by periodic revolutions, in proportion as the masses become organised, and just as the ancient nobility was destroyed a century ago. When Socialism shall have become master in Europe, its only chance of enduring will be to exterminate all the individuals without exception endowed with a superiority capable of raising them, however slightly, above the most humble level.

The two causes I have just set forth are of an artificial order, since they are the result of conditions of civilisation that may vary. But there is a further and far more important cause—it is an irresistible natural law—which will always prevent the *élite* of a nation,

not from becoming intellectually differentiated from the inferior grades, but from becoming so differentiated too rapidly. The present conditions of civilisation, which tend more and more to differentiate men of the same race, are confronted by the powerful laws of heredity which tend to bring about the disappearance of the individuals who surpass the average in too marked a manner, or at least to bring them down to this average.

Observations already old, recorded by the authors of investigations into heredity, have proved that the descendants of families distinguished by their intelligence are subject sooner or later—and most usually at an early date—to a process of degeneration which tends to extinguish them entirely.

Great intellectual superiority seems, then, to carry with it the penalty that those who possess it leave behind them degenerate offspring. In reality the point of the social pyramid of which I spoke above can only subsist on the condition that it assimilates elements from below. If all the individuals composing this *élite* were to be relegated to an isolated island, their inter-marriages would result in the formation of a race displaying a variety of degenerate symptoms and destined in consequence to dis-



appear speedily. Great intellectual superiorities may be compared to the botanical monstrosities created by the artifice of a gardener. Left to themselves they die off or return to the average type of the species, for the species is all powerful since it represents the long series of ancestors,

Attentive study of the different peoples shows that while the individuals of a given race may be immensely differentiated as regards the intelligence, they are but slightly differentiated as regards the character, that unalterable rock of which I have already shown the permanence throughout the ages. In studying a race it should be considered, in consequence, from two very different points of view. From the intellectual point of view its value depends on a small *élite* to which is due the scientific, literary, and industrial progress of a civilisation. From the point of view of character, acquaintance with the average is alone important. The strength of peoples is always dependent on the level of this average. Peoples may do at a pinch without an intellectual *élite*, but not without a certain level of character. We shall shortly prove this statement.

It is thus seen that while the individuals of a race become more and more differentiated intellectually as

time goes on, they always tend, as far as character is concerned, to oscillate round the average type of the race. It is to this average type, which progresses very slowly, that the great majority of the members of a nation belong. Around this fundamental kernel is found—in the case at least of the superior peoples—a thin layer of eminent minds, whose action is of capital importance as regards civilisation, but is without importance as regards the race. Incessantly being destroyed, it is incessantly being renewed at the expense of the average grades, which, for their part, vary but very slowly, since the slightest variations, in order to become durable, must be accumulated in the same direction by heredity during several centuries.

It was several years ago that I arrived, basing my conclusions on researches of a purely anatomical order, at the idea just enunciated touching the differentiation of individuals and races, and to justify which I have now invoked none but psychological reasons. As the two kinds of observation lead to the same results, I may be allowed to recall some of the conclusions of my earlier investigations. They are based on measurements executed on several thousands of skulls, ancient and modern, belonging to different

racés. I proceed to give the more essential passages :

The volume of the skull bears a close relation to the intelligence, when, leaving individual cases out of consideration, series are dealt with. It is then found that what distinguishes inferior from superior races is not the slight variations in the average capacity of their skulls, but this essential fact that the superior race contains a certain number of individuals whose brain is highly developed, whereas the inferior race contains no such individuals. Races differ, in consequence, not in respect to the masses that constitute them, but in respect to the small number of individuals who stand out from the crowd. The average difference between the skull in the case of two peoples—except when quite inferior races are under consideration—is never very considerable.

When the skulls are compared of the various human races, belonging to the past and present, it is found that the races in which the volume of the skull presents the greatest individual variations are the most highly civilised races ; that in proportion as a race grows civilised, the skulls of the individuals composing it become more and more differentiated ; a fact which leads to the result that civilisation conduces not to intellectual equality, but to an inequality that is always growing more pronounced. Anatomical and physiological equality only exist in the case of individuals of quite inferior races. The differences between the members of a tribe of savages, all of whom follow the same occupation, are perforce of the slightest. Between the peasant whose vocabulary consists of some three hundred words, and the man of learning who is familiar with a hundred thousand words and with the ideas that correspond to them, the difference is, on the contrary, enormous.

I should add to what precedes that the differentiation of individuals brought about by the development of civilisation is also apparent in the case of the sexes. Among inferior peoples or the inferior classes of superior peoples the man and the woman are intellectually on much the same level. On the other hand, in proportion as peoples grow civilised the difference between the sexes is accentuated.

The volume of the male and female skull, even when the subjects compared, as in my investigations, are strictly of the same age, height, and weight, presents differences that increase rapidly with the degree of civilisation. Very slight in the case of the inferior races, these differ-



ences become immense in the case of the superior races. In these superior races the feminine skulls are often scarcely more developed than those of the women of very inferior races. Whereas the average volume of the skulls of male Parisians is such as to range them among the largest known skulls, the average of the skulls of female Parisians classes them among the smallest skulls with which we are acquainted, almost on a level with the skulls of Chinese women, and scarcely above the feminine skulls of New Caledonia.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Dr. Gustave le Bon, *Recherches anatomiques et mathématiques sur les variations de volume du cerveau et sur leurs relations avec l'intelligence*: 8vo, 1879 (Memoir crowned by the Academy of Sciences and by the Society of Anthropology).

## CHAPTER V

### FORMATION OF THE HISTORICAL RACES

How historical races are formed—Conditions which allow of different races combining to form a single race—Influence of the number of the individuals involved in the process, of the dissimilarity of their characters, of the environments, etc.—Results of cross-breeding—Causes of the great inferiority of half-breeds—Mobility of the new psychological characteristics created by cross-breeding—How these characteristics come to be fixed—The critical periods of history—Cross-breeding constitutes an essential factor in the formation of new races, and at the same time a powerful factor in the dissolution of civilisations—Importance of the *régime* of castes—Influence of environment—Environment can only exert its influence on new races in process of formation, and on races whose ancestral characteristics are giving way before the action of cross-breeding—Environment is without influence on old races—Various examples—The majority of the historical races of Europe are still in process of formation—Political and social consequences—Why the period of formation of historical races will soon be over.

WE have already remarked that genuine races, in the scientific sense of the word, are scarcely to be met with among civilised peoples, but only historical races, by which is meant races created by the chances of conquest, immigration, politics, etc.,



and formed, in consequence, of a mixture of individuals of different origins.

How do these heterogeneous races come to combine and to form an historical race possessing common psychological characteristics? This is the point we are about to investigate.

Let it first of all be observed that the elements brought together by chance do not always combine. The German, Hungarian, Slav, and other populations that live under Austrain rule form perfectly distinct races which have never attempted to fuse. The Irish, who live under the rule of the English, are another example of fusion not taking place. As for the quite inferior peoples, such as Redskins, Australians, or Tasmanians, not only do they not combine with the superior peoples, but they disappear rapidly after they have come in contact with them. Experience proves that every inferior people which is confronted with a superior people is inevitably condemned to disappear at an early date.

Three conditions are necessary to allow of races fusing and forming a new and more or less homogeneous race.

The first condition is that the races which are to interbreed shall not be too unequal in number; the

- 2 second, that their characters shall not be too dis-  
3 similar ; the third, that they shall be subjected for  
a long period to identical conditions of environment.

The first of the conditions that have just been enumerated is of capital importance. A small number of white men transported into the midst of a numerous negro population disappear, after a few generations, without leaving any trace of their blood among their descendants. All the conquerors who have invaded too numerous populations have disappeared in this way. They have been able, as has been done by the Latins in Gaul or the Arabs in Egypt, to leave behind them their civilisation, their arts and their language, but they have never been able to bequeath their blood.

The second of the preceding conditions is also of very great importance. Doubtless very different races, the black and the white for example, may fuse, but the half-breeds that result constitute a population very inferior to those of which it is sprung, and utterly incapable of creating, or even of continuing, a civilisation. The influence of contrary heredities saps their morality and character. When half-breeds, the offspring of white men and negroes, have chanced to inherit a superior civilisation, as in Saint Domingo,

this civilisation has speedily been overtaken by the most lamentable degeneration. Cross-breeding may be a source of improvement when it occurs between superior and sufficiently allied races, such as the English and the Germans of America, but it always constitutes an element of degeneration when the races, even though superior, are too different.<sup>1</sup>

To cross two peoples is to change simultaneously both their physical constitution and their mental constitution. Cross-breeding, moreover, constitutes the only infallible means at our disposal of transforming in a fundamental manner the character of people, heredity being the only force powerful enough to contend with heredity. Cross-breeding allows of the creation of a new race, possessing new physical and psychological characteristics.

The characteristics thus created are at the outset

<sup>1</sup> All the countries inhabited by too large a proportion of half-breeds are, solely for this reason, given over to perpetual anarchy, unless they are ruled by an iron hand. Such will inevitably be the fate of Brazil. White men form only a third of its population. The remainder is composed of negroes and mulattoes. The famous Agassiz rightly observed "that it is sufficient to have visited Brazil for it to be impossible to deny the decadence that results from cross-breeding which goes on in this country to a greater extent than elsewhere. This cross-breeding is fatal, he says, to the best qualities whether of the white man, the black, or the Indian, and produces an indescribable type whose physical and mental energy suffers."



very weak and fluctuating. To fix them long, hereditary accumulations are necessary. The first effect of interbreeding between different races is to destroy the soul of the races, and by their soul we mean that congeries of common ideas and sentiments which make the strength of peoples, and without which there is no such thing as a nation or a fatherland. The period of interbreeding is the critical period in the history of peoples, a period of commencement and hesitancy which all nations have had to traverse, for there is scarcely a European people that is not formed of the *débris* of other peoples. It is a period full of intestine struggles and of vicissitudes, and it continues so long as the new psychological characteristics are not fixed.

What precedes shows that interbreeding should be considered at once as a fundamental element in the formation of new races and as a powerful factor in the dissolution of ancient races. It is with reason, then, that all the peoples that have reached a high degree of civilisation carefully avoid intermarrying with foreigners. Had it not been for the admirable *régime* of castes, the handful of Aryans that invaded India, some three thousand years ago, would have been quickly swamped by the immense masses of the

dark-coloured populations that surrounded them on every side, and no civilisation would have come into existence on the soil of the great peninsula. If in modern times the English had not followed the same system, if they had consented to intermarry with the indigenous inhabitants, their gigantic Indian Empire would long since have slipped from their grasp. A people may sustain many losses, may be overtaken by many catastrophes, and yet recover from the ordeal, but it has lost everything, and is past recovery, when it has lost its soul.

It is at the moment when decadent civilisations have become the prey of peaceful or warlike invaders that interbreeding fills in succession the destructive and then the creative rôle of which I have just spoken. Cross-breeding destroys an ancient civilisation because it destroys the soul of the people that possesses it. It fosters the creation of a new civilisation because the old psychological characteristics of the races in contact have been destroyed, and because new characteristics may be formed under the influence of the new conditions of existence.

It is only on races in course of formation, and whose ancestral characteristics have been destroyed in consequence by contrary heredities, that the in-



fluence can be effective of the last of the factors mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the influence of environment. While very slight on ancient races, the influence of environment is, on the contrary, very great on new races. Cross-breeding, by destroying the ancestral, psychological characteristics, creates a sort of blank tablet on which the action of environment, continued during centuries, may succeed in impressing and finally in giving fixity to new psychological characteristics. Then, and then only, the formation of a new historical race results. It is in this way that the French race was constituted.

The influence of environment—physical or moral—is in consequence very great or very slight according to circumstances, and this is the explanation of the contrary opinions that have been formulated with regard to its action. We have just seen that this influence is very great on races in course of formation; but had we been considering ancient races solidly established by the long action of heredity, we could have said that the influence of environment is, on the contrary, almost inappreciable.

As regards moral environment, we have proof of the insignificance of its action in the failure of our

Western civilisations to influence the peoples of the East, even when these latter have been subjected to their contact during several generations ; the Chinese inhabitants of the United States are a case in point. The slight power of physical environment is shown by the difficulties that attend acclimatisation. Transported into surroundings too different from those to which it is accustomed, an ancient race—and the statement is equally applicable to men, animals, and plants—perishes sooner than submit to transformation. Egypt has always been the tomb of the many different races that have effected its conquest. Not a single people has been able to acclimatise itself in the country. Neither Greeks, Romans, Persians, Arabs, nor Turks have been able to leave behind them a trace of their race. The only type that is met with is that of the impassible Fellah whose features exactly resemble those engraved seven thousand years ago on the tombs and palaces of the Pharaohs by the Egyptian artists.

The majority of the historical races of Europe are still in course of formation, and it is important that it should be known that this is the case with a view to understanding their history. At the present day the Englishman is the only European who represents an

almost completely fixed race. In his case the ancient Briton, the Saxon, and the Norman have given way to a new and highly homogeneous type. In France, on the contrary, the Provençal is very different from the Breton, the inhabitant of Auvergne from the inhabitant of Normandy. Still, if there does not exist as yet an average type of the Frenchman, there at least exist average types of certain regions. Unfortunately these types are very distinct as regards their ideas and character. It is difficult in consequence to devise institutions which shall suit them all equally well, and it is only by dint of energetic concentration that it is possible to lend them some community of thought. Our profound divergences of sentiment and belief, and the political upheavals which result therefrom, are due, in the main, to differences of mental constitution, which the future alone will perhaps be able to efface.

Such has always been the situation when different races have found themselves in contact. The dissentiments and intestine struggles have always been the more acute in proportion as the races in presence have been the more different. When they are too unlike it becomes absolutely impossible to make them live under the same institutions and the same laws.



The history of great empires composed of different races has always been identical. Most often they disappear with their founder. Among modern nations, only the English and the Dutch have been successful in imposing their yoke on Asiatic peoples differing widely from them, and their success is solely due to the fact that they have respected the manners, customs, and laws of the peoples in question, leaving them in reality to govern themselves, and confining their rôle to appropriating a portion of the taxes, to engaging in commerce, and to maintaining peace.

Apart from these rare exceptions, all the great empires composed of dissimilar peoples owe their foundation to force and are destined to perish by violence. To enable a nation to constitute itself and to endure, it is necessary that its formation should be slow, and the result of the gradual fusion of but slightly different races, interbreeding, living on the same soil, undergoing the action of the same environment, and having the same institutions and beliefs. After the lapse of several centuries these distinct races may come to form a highly homogeneous nation.

As the world grows older, the races become more and more stable and their transformation by means

of fusion rarer and rarer. As it advances in age, humanity feels the burden of heredity grow heavier, and transformations become more difficult. So far as Europe is concerned, it may be said that the era of the formation of historical races will soon be over.





## **BOOK II**

*HOW THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS  
OF RACES ARE DISPLAYED IN THE VARIOUS  
ELEMENTS OF THEIR CIVILISATIONS*



## BOOK II

### *HOW THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RACES ARE DISPLAYED IN THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THEIR CIVILISATIONS*

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#### CHAPTER I

##### THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF A CIVILISATION CON- SIDERED AS AN EXTERIOR MANIFESTATION OF THE SOUL OF A PEOPLE

The elements of which a civilisation is composed are the exterior manifestations of the soul of the peoples, which have created them—The importance of these various elements varies with the different peoples—According to the several peoples it is the arts, literature, institutions, etc., that fill the fundamental rôle—Examples from antiquity: the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans—The evolution of the different elements of a civilisation may be independent of the general march of that civilisation—Examples supplied by the arts—What they express—Impossibility of finding in a single element of a civilisation the measure of the level of that civilisation—Elements which assure the superiority of a people—Elements which philosophically are very inferior may be socially very superior.

THE different elements, languages, institutions, ideas, beliefs, arts, literature, of which a civilisation is composed should be regarded as the

exterior manifestation of the soul of the men who have created them. The importance, however, of these elements as the expression of the soul of a people varies greatly with the period and the races.

Few books relating to works of art appear at the present day that do not contain the statement that works of art are the faithful rendering of the thought of peoples and the most important expression of their civilisation.

Doubtless it is often true that this is the case, but the rule is a long way from being absolute, and the development of the arts is far from corresponding invariably to the intellectual development of nations. While there are certain peoples for whom works of art are the most important manifestation of their soul, there are others, who occupy, moreover, a high rank in the scale of civilisation, among whom the arts have played but a very secondary part. If the history of the civilisation of each people had to be written on the understanding that only one of its elements was to be considered, the element chosen ought to vary in the case of each people. For some peoples the element would be the arts, but for others it would be their institutions, their military organisation, their industry, their commerce, etc., that would



give us the best knowledge of them. It is important to establish this point at the outset, for it will enable us later to understand how it is that the various elements of a civilisation have undergone very unequal transformations when transmitted from one people to another.

Among the peoples of antiquity, the Egyptians and Romans offer highly characteristic examples of this inequality in the development of the various elements of a civilisation, and even in the various branches of which each of these elements is composed.

Let us begin by considering the Egyptians. Their literature was always very weak, their painting of very poor quality. In architecture and statuary, on the contrary, they produced masterpieces. Their monuments still excite our admiration. The Egyptian statues that have come down to us, the Scribe, the Cheik-el-Beled, Rahotep, Nefert-Ari, and many others would still be models at the present day, and it was only during a very short period that they were surpassed by the Greeks.

With the Egyptians let us compare the Romans, whose rôle in history was so preponderating. They lacked neither educators nor models, since they came after the Egyptians and Greeks; and yet they did

not succeed in creating a personal art. No people, perhaps, has ever displayed less originality in its artistic productions. The Romans held the arts in very slight esteem, scarcely regarding them from other than a utilitarian point of view, and looking on them merely as a sort of imported article analogous to the other products, such as metals, aromatics, and spices for which they were indebted to foreign peoples. At the period when they were already masters of the world, the Romans had no national art, and even later on, when universal peace, wealth, and the needs of luxury somewhat developed their weak, artistic sentiments, it was always to Greece that they went for models and artists. The history of Roman architecture and sculpture is scarcely more than an appendix to the history of the sculpture and architecture of Greece.

On the other hand this great Roman people, which was so inferior in the arts, developed three other elements of civilisation to the highest pitch. It possessed military institutions which insured it the empire of the world; political and juridical institutions which still serve us as models; and finally, it created a literature which for centuries has been the source of inspiration of our own.

We thus have a striking example of the unequal development of the elements of a civilisation in the case of two nations whose high degree of culture cannot be contested, and we can divine the errors that would result from taking as sole standard but one of these elements—the arts for example. We have just found that among the Egyptians the arts, with the exception of painting, were extremely original and remarkable, while literature, on the contrary, did not rise above mediocrity. Among the Romans the arts were mediocre and without a trace of originality, but they shone in the field of literature, and their military and political institutions were of the highest order.

The Greeks themselves, though one of the peoples that has displayed the most superiority in the most different fields, may also be cited in proof of the unequal way in which the development of the various elements of a civilisation proceeds. At the Homeric epoch their literature was already very brilliant, since the songs of Homer are still regarded as the models with which the students of the European universities are condemned to saturate themselves; a view that has been taken for centuries past. But the discoveries of modern archæology have proved that, at the



period to which the Homeric songs belong, Greek sculpture and architecture were grossly barbarian, and confined to crude imitations of Egyptian and Assyrian art.

However, it is more especially the Hindoos that furnish us with an example of the unequal development of the different elements of a civilisation. As regards architecture they have been surpassed by very few peoples. As regards philosophy the depth of their speculations has only been attained to by European thought at a quite recent date. In literature, if they do not reach the level of the Greeks and Latins, they have nevertheless produced admirable work. Their statuary, on the contrary, is mediocre, and much below that of the Greeks. In the domain of science and in that of historical knowledge, they have absolutely nothing to show, and they exhibit an absence of precision that is not met with to an equal degree in any other people. Their sciences have been mere childish speculations; their histories absurd legends, containing not a single exact date and probably not a single exact event. In their case, once again, the exclusive study of the arts would be insufficient to determine the level of their civilisation.



Many other examples might be adduced in support of what precedes. There are races which, although they have never occupied an absolutely superior rank, have succeeded in creating an absolutely personal art bearing no visible relation to anterior models. The Arabs are a case in point. Less than a century after they had invaded the old Greco-Roman world, they had so utterly transformed the Byzantine architecture they had begun by adopting, that it would be impossible to determine the types that had inspired them, if it were not that we are still able to consult the series of intermediary monuments.

Moreover, even if a people should not possess any artistic or literary aptitude, it is capable of creating a civilisation of a superior order. This happened in the case of the Phenicians, whose sole superiority was their skill in commerce. It was they who civilised the ancient world by bringing all its parts into communication; but as far as they themselves were concerned they produced scarcely anything, and the history of their civilisation is the history of their commerce.

Finally, there are peoples among whom all the elements of civilisation have remained in an inferior state with the exception of the arts. The Mongolians

were a people of this kind. The monuments they raised in India, in a style about which there is scarcely anything Hindoo, are so magnificent that competent artists declare that some of them rank among the most beautiful monuments that have been raised by the hand of man ; and yet nobody could think of classing the Mongols among the superior races.

It will be noticed, moreover, that even among the most civilised peoples, it is not always at the culminating period of their civilisation that the arts attain to the highest degree of development. Among the Egyptians and among the Hindoos the most perfect monuments are generally the most ancient ; while in Europe, it was in the Middle Ages, an epoch regarded as semi-barbarian, that flourished that marvellous Gothic art whose admirable productions have never been equalled.

In consequence it is quite impossible to judge of the level of a people solely by the development of its arts, which constitute, I repeat, but one of the elements of its civilisation, and an element whose superiority is not proven—any more than the superiority of literature is proven. It often happens, on the contrary, that it is among the peoples at the head of civilisation—the Romans, for instance, in

ancient times and the Americans at the present day—that artistic productions show the most weakness. Frequently too, as we just remarked, it has been in semi-barbarous ages that the peoples have produced their literary and artistic masterpieces—their artistic masterpieces more especially. It would even seem that the period of personality in the arts, in the case of a people, is a growth belonging to its childhood or its youth and not to its maturity; and if it be considered that, among the utilitarian preoccupations of the new world of which we catch a glimpse of the dawn, the rôle of the arts is scarcely observable, we may foresee the day when they will be classed if not among the inferior, at least among the quite secondary manifestations of a civilisation.

There are many reasons why the progress of the arts in their evolution should not be parallel to that of the other elements of a civilisation, and should not in consequence be always a sure indication of the state of this civilisation. Whether in the case of Egypt, of Greece, or of the various European peoples, we observe this general law that as soon as art has reached a certain level, as soon that is as certain masterpieces have been produced, there immediately commences a period of decadence entirely independent



of the movement of the other elements of the civilisation. This decadent phase of the arts subsists until a political revolution, an invasion, the adoption of new beliefs or any other factor introduces new elements into art. It was in this way that in the Middle Ages the Crusades were the source of fresh knowledge and new ideas, which gave an impulsion to art that resulted in the transformation of the Roman style into the Gothic style. It was in this way again that, several centuries later, the revival of Greek and Latin studies brought about the transformation of Gothic art into the art of the Renaissance. In India, too, the Mussulman invasions caused the transformation of Hindoo art in precisely the same fashion.

It is also of importance to observe, that since the arts express in general fashion certain of the needs of civilisation and correspond to certain sentiments, they are fated to undergo transformations in conformity with these needs, and even to disappear entirely if the needs and the sentiments which have given birth to them should themselves be transformed or disappear. It will in nowise follow, however, that the civilisation is on this account in decadence, and here once more we are confronted with the absence



of parallelism between the evolution of the arts and that of the other elements of a civilisation. At no period in history has civilisation been at so high a pitch as at the present day, and at no period perhaps has art been more commonplace and less personal. The religious beliefs, the ideas and the needs which made art an essential element of civilisation at the periods when it had temples and palaces for its sanctuaries having disappeared, art has become an accessory, an instrument of pleasure to which it is not possible to devote either much time or much money. Being no longer a necessity, it can scarcely escape being artificial and imitative. At the present day there are no longer peoples who possess a national art, and each people, in architecture as in sculpture, lives on more or less happy copies of the work of bygone epochs.

These modest copies doubtless represent needs or caprices, but it is clear that it is impossible that they should express our modern ideas. I admire the naïve works of our artists of the Middle Ages, as seen in their paintings of saints, of Christ, of Paradise and Hell, all of which were of fundamental importance at the time and the principal concern of existence; but when painters who no longer entertain these

beliefs cover our walls with primitive legends or childish symbols in an attempt to return to the technique of another age, they merely produce wretched imitations without interest for the present and destined to arouse contempt in the future.

The only real arts, the only arts which are the expression of an epoch, are those in which the artist represents what he feels or what he sees instead of confining himself to the imitation of forms corresponding to needs or beliefs we have ceased to possess. The only sincere painting of the present day is that which reproduces the things by which we are surrounded, just as the only sincere architecture is that of the five-storied house, the viaduct, and the railway station. This utilitarian art corresponds to the needs and ideas of our civilisation. It is as characteristic of the epoch as were formerly the Gothic church and the feudal castle. For the archæologist of the future the great modern caravansaries and the old Gothic churches will be of equal interest because they will be successive pages in those books of stone which each century leaves behind it, while he will disdain as useless documents the sorry counterfeit copies of so many modern artists.

Every æsthetic system represents the ideal of an

epoch and of a race, and for the sole reason that epochs and races are different, the ideal must constantly be varying. From the philosophic point of view all ideals are of equal worth, for they constitute more transitory symbols.

The arts then, like all the elements of a civilisation, are the exterior manifestation of the soul of the people that has created them; but we ought to recognise, however, that they are far from constituting in the case of all peoples the most exact manifestation of their thought.

This demonstration was necessary. For the importance in the case of a given people of a given element of civilisation is a measure of the power of transformation which that people brings to bear on the element in question when it borrows it from a foreign race. If its personality displays itself more especially in the arts, for example, its reproductions of imported models are sure to be deeply marked by its own imprint. On the contrary it will transform but very slightly the elements that are incapable of serving to interpret its genius. When the Romans adopted the architecture of Greece they did not make it the object of radical modifications, because they did not put what was most characteristic of their soul into their monuments.



Still, even in the case of such a people as the Romans, who were without a personal architecture, and who were constrained to go to the foreigner for their models and their artists, art is obliged in the course of but few centuries to undergo the influence of environment and to become, almost in spite of itself, the expression of the race that has adopted it. The temples, palaces, triumphal arches, and bas-reliefs of ancient Rome are the work of Greeks or of pupils of the Greeks; and yet the character of these monuments, their destination, their ornaments, even their dimensions, do not arouse in us the delicate, poetic memories of the Athenian genius, but rather the ideas of force, of domination, and of military passion with which the mighty soul of Rome was imbued. Thus, even in the field in which it shows itself least personal, a race can accomplish nothing that does not bear some trace of the fact that it was due to its initiative, and without revealing something of its mental constitution and innermost thought.

The explanation is that the true artist, whether architect or poet, possesses the magic faculty of expressing in his syntheses the soul of an epoch and of a race. Very impressionable, very unconscious,



thinking more especially in images, and reasoning but little, artists are at certain epochs the faithful mirrors of the society in which they live; their works are the most exact documents to which recourse can be had with a view to evoking a vanished civilisation. They are too unconscious not to be sincere, and too impressed by their surroundings not to give faithful expression to the ideas, sentiments, needs and tendencies of their environment. They are not free to create what they choose, and the fact constitutes their strength. They are imprisoned in a network of traditions, ideas, and beliefs, the sum total of which constitutes the soul of a race and an epoch, the inheritance of sentiments, thoughts, and inspirations, whose influence is all powerful over them because it governs the obscure regions of the unconscious in which their works are elaborated. Were we without these works, and did we know nothing of the vanished centuries but what is related of them in the absurd narratives and artificial arrangements of the books of history, the real past of each people would be almost as great an enigma to us as that of the mysterious Atlantiades submerged, according to Plato, by the waters.

The essential characteristic, then, of the work of

art is to be the sincere expression of the needs and ideas of the age that gives it birth. Of all the various languages which relate the story of the past, works of art, those of architecture in particular, are the most intelligible. More sincere than books, less artificial than religions and languages, they express both the sentiments and the needs of their period. The architect builds the dwelling-places of men and those of the gods, and it was always within the precincts of the temple or those of the house that were elaborated the first causes of the events which constitute history.

We may conclude from what precedes, that while the various elements of which a civilisation is composed are indeed the expression of the soul of the people that has created them, certain of these elements—though which of them varies with the races and also with the epochs in the case of the same race—are a more exact expression of the soul of a race than others.

Since, however, the nature of these elements varies with the different peoples and the different epochs, it is evident that it is impossible to find a single element capable of serving as a common standard whereby to gauge the level of the different civilisations.

It is also evident that a hierarchical classification cannot be established among these elements, for the classification would vary from century to century, the importance of the elements considered varying itself with the periods.

If the value of the diverse elements of a civilisation were to be judged solely from the point of view of pure utility, it might be affirmed that the most important elements of a civilisation are those which allow one people to subject another, that is to say military institutions. But if this test were adopted, it would be necessary to rank the Greeks, a nation of artists, philosophers, and writers, after the Romans with their invincible cohorts, the virtuous and learned Egyptians after the semi-barbarian Persians, and the Hindoos after the Mongols who were also semi-barbarians.

History is but little concerned with these subtle distinctions. The only superiority before which it always bows is military superiority, which is very rarely accompanied by a corresponding superiority in the other elements of civilisation, or at least does not long allow the maintenance at its side of this latter superiority. Unfortunately military superiority cannot decline among a people without that people

being fated to disappear. It has always been when they had reached the apogee of civilisation, that the superior peoples have had to retire before barbarians, much their inferiors as regards intelligence, but possessing certain qualities of character and warlike aptitudes to which too refined civilisations have always been fatal.

It is necessary, in consequence, to arrive at the saddening conclusion that it is the elements which, philosophically speaking, are inferior, that are the most important from the social point of view. If the laws of the future are to be those of the past, it may be said that to have attained to too high a degree of intelligence and culture is what is most harmful to a people. Peoples perish as soon as the qualities of character which form the groundwork of their soul begin to decline, and these qualities decline as soon as the civilisation and intelligence of a people reach a high level.



## CHAPTER II

### HOW INSTITUTIONS, RELIGIONS, AND LANGUAGES ARE TRANSFORMED

The superior races are as powerless as the inferior races to transform suddenly the elements of their civilisation—Contradictions presented by the peoples which have changed their religions, languages, and arts—The example of Japan—In what respect these changes are only apparent—The profound transformations undergone by Buddhism, Brahmanism, Mahometanism and Christianity according to the various races by which they have been adopted—The variations undergone by institutions and languages according to the race that adopts them—That the words which in different languages are considered to correspond represent very dissimilar ideas and modes of thought—Impossibility for this reason of translating certain languages—Why, in books of history, the civilisation of a people sometimes seems to have undergone profound changes—Limits of the reciprocal influence of different civilisations.

WE have shown in a previous book that the superior races are wholly unable to induce inferior races to accept their civilisation or to thrust it on them. Taking one by one the most powerful means of action at the disposal of Europeans—education, institutions, beliefs—we have proved their absolute inefficacy as means of changing the soci-

state of the inferior peoples. We have endeavoured to establish, that since all the elements of a civilisation correspond to a certain well-defined mental constitution created by heredity in the course of a long past, it is impossible to modify them without changing the mental constitution of which they are the outcome. Such a task is beyond the power of conquerors, and can only be accomplished by the lapse of centuries. We have also shown that it is only by a series of successive stages, analogous to those traversed by the barbarians who destroyed the Greco-Roman civilisation, that a people can rise in the scale of civilisation. If it be sought, by means of education, to spare a people these stages, all that is done is to disorganise its morality and its intelligence, and to reduce it in the end to a level inferior to that it would have reached if it had been left to itself.

The arguments we have applied to inferior races are equally applicable to superior races. If the principles we have set forth in this work are correct, it ought to be clear that the superior races are also incapable of suddenly transforming their civilisation. They, too, require time, and need to traverse successive stages. If the superior peoples seem at times to have adopted beliefs, institutions, languages and

arts differing from those of their ancestors, they have done so in reality only after having slowly and profoundly transformed them so as to bring them into touch with their mental constitution.

History appears to contradict on every page the preceding proposition. It offers us frequent examples of peoples changing the elements of their civilisation, adopting new religions, new languages, new institutions. Some peoples abandon the beliefs they have held for centuries and are converted to Christianity, Buddhism or Mahometanism : others transform their language ; yet others radically modify their institutions and their arts. It even seems that it rests with a conqueror or an apostle to provoke such transformations, or even that they result from a mere caprice.

History, however, in offering these accounts of sudden revolutions does no more than accomplish one of its habitual missions : the creation and propagation of enduring errors. When these alleged changes are closely studied, it is soon perceived that it is only the names of things that easily vary, whereas the realities hidden behind the words continue to exist and are only transformed with exceeding slowness.

To prove this assertion, and to show at the same



time how the slow evolution of things goes on behind denominations that remain unchanged, it would be necessary to study the elements of each civilisation in the case of the different peoples, that is to re-write their history. I have already essayed this laborious task in several volumes; it will not be asked, in consequence, that I should again attempt it here. Leaving aside the numerous elements of which a civilisation is composed, I shall choose but one of them as an example: the arts.

Before approaching, however, in a special chapter, the study of the evolution accomplished by the arts in passing from one people to another, I shall make a few remarks respecting the changes undergone by the other elements of civilisation, in order to show that the laws applicable to one of these elements are perfectly applicable to all of them, and that if the arts of the different peoples correspond to a certain mental constitution, as much is to be said of their languages, institutions, beliefs, etc., which in consequence cannot change suddenly and pass indifferently from one people to another.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I shall not deal here with the case of Japan, having already treated it elsewhere, while I shall certainly return to it on a future occasion. It would be impossible to study in a few pages a question on the subject of which eminent statesmen are the victims of delusions which



It is more especially in connection with religious beliefs that this theory may appear paradoxical, and yet it is precisely in the history of these very beliefs that the best examples are to be found in proof that it is as impossible for a people suddenly to change the elements of its civilisation, as for an individual to alter his stature or the colour of his eyes.

Nobody, doubtless, is ignorant that all the great religions, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Christianity, or Mahometanism, have provoked conversions *en masse* among entire races who have seemed to adopt them on a sudden ; however, when a closer study is made of these conversions it is soon observed that what the peoples have more especially changed is the name of their old religion and not their religion itself, and that in reality the adopted beliefs have undergone the transformations necessary to bring

are shared unfortunately by certain philosophers wanting in insight. The prestige adhering to military triumphs, even though achieved at the expense of mere barbarians, still remains for many minds the criterion of the level of a civilisation. It is possible to drill an army of negroes in accordance with European military principles and to teach them to handle rifles and canon, but their mental inferiority and the consequences it involves will not be modified on this account. The varnish of European civilisation boasted at present by Japan in nowise corresponds to the mental condition of the race. It is a trumpery borrowed garment which will soon be rent by violent revolutions.

them into touch with the old beliefs they have replaced, and of which in reality they are a mere continuation.

The transformations undergone by beliefs in passing from one people to another are often indeed so considerable, that the newly adopted religion has no longer any visible relationship with that of which it has kept the name. The best example is offered us by Buddhism, which, after having been transported into China, has become so unrecognisable that the learned took it at first to be an independent religion and were a long time before they recognised that this religion was merely Buddhism transformed by the race that had adopted it. Chinese Buddhism is in no sort the Buddhism of India, itself very different from the Buddhism of Nepaul, which in turn is sufficiently distinct from the Buddhism of Ceylon. In India, Buddhism was a schism from Brahmanism which preceded it, and from which at bottom it differed to no very great extent; in China, it was also a schism from earlier beliefs to which it is closely related.

The rigorous proof that is possible in the case of Buddhism is forthcoming as well in that of Brahmanism. The races of India being extremely varied, it was easy to presume that, under identical

names, they would have extremely different religious beliefs. Doubtless all the Brahmanic peoples regard Vishnou and Siva as their principal divinities and the Vedas as their sacred books ; but of these fundamental gods the religion has retained but the name, and of the sacred books but the text. Around these central and common features have grown up innumerable cults in which are found, according to the races, the most varied beliefs : monotheism, polytheism, fetichism, pantheism, the worship of ancestors, of demons, of animals, etc. Were the religions of India to be judged solely by what is found concerning them in the Vedas, not the least idea would be obtained of the gods and beliefs of the immense peninsula. The title of the sacred books is venerated by all the Brahmans, but there survives in general nothing of the religion taught by these books.

Islamism itself, in spite of the simplicity of its monotheism, has not evaded this law ; it is a far cry from the Islamism of Persia to that of Arabia and that of India. The Hindoo, essentially a polytheist, has contrived to render polytheistic the most monotheistic of beliefs. For the fifty millions of Hindoo Mahometans, Mahomet and the saints of Islam are



scarcely more than new gods added to thousands of others. Islamism has ever been unable to establish in India that equality of all men which elsewhere was one of the causes of its success. The Mussulmans of India, like the other Hindoos, practise the system of castes. In the Deccan, among the Dravidian populations, Islamism has become so unrecognisable that it can scarcely be distinguished from Brahmanism; indeed it would not be distinguished from it at all but for the name of Mahomet, and for the mosque where the prophet, become a god, is worshipped.

It is not necessary to go as far as India to observe the profound modifications undergone by Islamism in passing from one race to another. It suffices to consider our great possession, Algeria. It contains two very different races: Arabs and Berbers, both of them Mussulmans. The Islamism of the former is far removed from that of the latter; the polygamy of the Koran has become monogamy among the Berbers, whose religion is scarcely more than a fusion between Islamism and the old paganism practised by the race since the distant ages of Carthaginian rule.

The religions of Europe themselves are not excepted from the common law which obliges beliefs to under-



go a transformation in accordance with the soul of the races by which they are adopted. As in India, the letter of the dogmas fixed by the texts has remained invariable; but these dogmas are vain formulæ of which each race interprets the meaning after its own fashion. Under the uniform denomination of Christians are found in Europe veritable pagans, such as the Bas-Breton who worships idols; fetichists, such as the Spaniard who adores amulets; polytheists, such as the Italian who venerates as very different divinities the madonnas of each village. Were this study to be prosecuted further, it would be easy to show that the great religious schism of the Reformation was the necessary consequence of the interpretation of one and the same religious book by different races: those of the North, wishing to discuss their belief, regulate their life themselves, and those of the South having remained far behind from the point of view of independence and the philosophic spirit. No example would be more convincing.

These are facts, however, the development of which would lead us beyond our scope. We shall have to deal still more briefly with the two other fundamental elements of civilisation, institutions and languages, because it would be necessary to enter into technical

details that wholly surpass the limits of this work. What is true in the case of beliefs, is equally true in that of institutions; these latter cannot be transmitted from one people to another without undergoing transformation. Not wishing to multiply examples, I beg the reader merely to consider how greatly, in modern times, the same institutions, imposed by force or persuasion on different races, have been transformed, though retaining identical names. I shall demonstrate the fact in a forthcoming chapter in connection with the different regions of America.

Institutions are the outcome in reality of necessities on which the will of a single generation of men can have no action. For each race, and for each phase of the evolution of that race, there are conditions of existence, sentiments, thoughts, opinions, hereditary influences which imply certain institutions and do not imply others. The label a Government bears is of very slight importance. It has never been accorded a people to choose the institutions which appear to it to be the best. Should some rare stroke of chance allow a people to choose its institutions, it will be unable to keep them. The numerous revolutions, the successive changes of constitution, affected by the French during the last hundred years con-

stitute an experience which should long since have settled the opinion of statesmen on this point. I believe, moreover, that it is scarcely elsewhere than in the obtuse brain of the masses and the narrow minds of some few fanatics that the idea can persist that important social changes are to be brought about by legislative acts. The only useful rôle of institutions is to give legal sanction to changes which manners and public opinion have ended by accepting. Institutions are moulded by these changes, but they are not in advance of them. The character and thought of men are not to be modified by institutions. It is not by institutions that a people is rendered religious or sceptical, or that it is taught to conduct its own affairs without incessantly demanding of the State that it shall forge it a chain.

I shall not dwell on the question of languages any more than on that of institutions, and shall confine myself to drawing attention to the fact that even where a language is fixed by writing, it is necessarily transformed in passing from one people to another, a truth that renders so absurd the idea of an universal language. Doubtless the Gauls, in spite of their immense numerical superiority, had adopted the Latin language less than two centuries after their conquest,



but they were quick to bring the newly adopted tongue into harmony with their needs, and the logic peculiar to their bent of mind. Modern French is the final result of these transformations.

It is impossible for different races to speak the same language for any length of time. The chances of conquest, the interests of its commerce may doubtless bring a people to adopt another language in the place of its mother tongue, but after the lapse of a few generations the language adopted will have been entirely transformed. The transformation will be the more thorough in proportion as the race from which the language has been borrowed is the more different from that which has borrowed it.

Dissimilar languages are always certain to be met with in countries inhabited by different races. India affords an excellent example in point. The great peninsula being inhabited by numerous different races, it is not astonishing that two hundred and forty languages should, according to the linguistic authorities, be spoken in it, some of them differing more from each other than do French and Greek. These two hundred and forty languages do not include some three hundred dialects! The widest spread among these languages is quite modern, since it has only



existed for three centuries; it is Hindustanee, a language formed by a combination of the Persian and Arabian spoken by the Mussulman conquerors and Hindi, one of the principal tongues of the invaded regions. Conquerors and conquered soon forgot their primitive language, exchanging it for a new language adapted to the needs of the new race produced by the interbreeding of the various peoples brought together.

I cannot dwell longer on the matter, and am obliged to confine myself to indicating the fundamental ideas. Were I able to enter into the necessary developments, I would go further and would say that where peoples are different, the words considered among them as corresponding represent modes of thinking and feeling so far apart, that in reality their languages have no synonyms, and real translation from one language into the other is impossible. How wholly this is the case will be understood by observing how in the same country, and among the same race, the same word corresponds in the course of centuries to quite dissimilar ideas.

Old words represent the ideas of the men of the past. Words which at their origin were the signs of real things soon have their meaning altered in conse-

quence of changes in ideas, manners, and customs. Recourse is still had to these timeworn signs, for it would be too difficult to change them, but there is no correspondence between what they represented at a given moment, and what they signify at the present day. In the case of peoples at a great distance from us, and whose civilisations were without analogy with our own, translations can only give words absolutely deprived of their real primitive sense, words, that is, evoking ideas in our mind which have no relation to those they formerly evoked. This phenomenon is specially striking in connection with the ancient languages of India. The ideas of the Indian people are indistinct, their logic has no relationship with our own, and their words have never had that precise and definite meaning which the lapse of centuries and the turn of our minds has ended by giving words in Europe. There are books, the Vedas for example, the translation of which, though it has been vainly attempted, is impossible.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult enough to penetrate the thought of the

<sup>1</sup> Talking of the numerous attempts to translate the Vedas, an eminent Indian scholar, Mr. Barth, remarks: "All these various and at times so contradictory investigations have one result; they demonstrate how impossible it is for us to make a translation, in the true sense of the word, of the Vedas."

individuals with whom we live, but from whom we are separated by certain differences of age, sex, and education ; to penetrate the thought of races on whom the dust of centuries has accumulated is a task no scholar will ever succeed in accomplishing. All the learning it is possible to acquire merely serves to show the complete uselessness of attempts of the kind.

Brief and slightly developed though the preceding examples be, they suffice to show how profound are the transformations peoples effect in the elements of civilisation they borrow. The importance of the elements borrowed often appears to be considerable, because the change in names is in fact sudden ; this importance is in reality very slight. In the course of centuries, thanks to the slow labours of generations and in consequence of successive additions, the borrowed element ends by differing greatly from the element of which it originally took the place. History, which takes note more especially of appearances, pays but little attention to these successive variations, and when it tells us, for example, that a people adopted a new religion, what we at once represent to ourselves is not at all the beliefs really adopted, but the religion such as we know it at the present day.



It is necessary to study these slow adaptations with the utmost closeness, in order to understand their genesis, and to detect the differences that separate words from realities.

The history of civilisations is thus composed of slow adaptations, of slight successive transformations. If these latter appear to us to be sudden and considerable, it is because, as in geology, we suppress the intermediate phases and only consider the extreme phases.

In reality, however intelligent and gifted a people be supposed to be, its capacity for absorbing a new element of civilisation is always very restricted. The brain cells do not assimilate in a day what it has taken centuries to create, and what is adapted to the sentiments and needs of organisms that differ from one another. Only slow hereditary accumulations allow of such assimilations. Further on, when we come to study the evolutions of the arts among the most intelligent of the peoples of antiquity, the Greeks, we shall see that many centuries were necessary before the rude copies of Assyrian and Egyptian models were left behind, and, after long successive stages, those masterpieces were produced which are still the admiration of humanity.



It must also be observed that all the peoples which have succeeded one another in history—with the exception of a few primitive peoples such as the Egyptians and Chaldeans—have had little to assimilate beyond the elements of civilisation which constitute the inheritance of the past ; elements they have transformed in accordance with their mental constitution. The development of the world's civilisations would have been infinitely slower, and the history of the various peoples would have been one eternal recommencement, if they had been unable to profit by the materials elaborated before their time. The civilisations created some seven or eight thousand years ago, by the inhabitants of Egypt and Chaldæa, have served as a store of materials to which all the nations have had recourse in turn. The arts of Greece owe their origin to the arts created on the banks of the Tigris and the Nile. The Grecian style gave birth to the Roman style which, under the action of Oriental influences, has given birth to the Byzantine, Roman, and Gothic styles, styles which vary according to the genius and age of the peoples among whom they flourished, but styles that have a common origin.

What we have just said in connection with the arts

is applicable to all the elements of a civilisation: institutions, languages, and beliefs. The European languages are derived from a mother-tongue which was spoken in the past on the central plateau of Asia. French law is an offshoot of Roman law, itself the offshoot of earlier codes of law. The Jewish religion proceeds directly from the Chaldæan beliefs. Associated with Aryan beliefs it has become the great religion which for nearly two thousand years has exerted its sway over the Western peoples. Our sciences themselves would not be what they are were it not for the slow labour of centuries. The great founders of modern astronomy, Copernicus, Kepler, and Newton, are the lineal descendants of Ptolemy, whose books retained their influence down to the fifteenth century, while Ptolemy descends, through the Alexandrian school, from the astronomers of Egypt and Chaldæa. We thus get a glimpse, in spite of the formidable gaps of which history is full, of a slow evolution of our knowledge which takes us back through the successive ages and empires to the dawn of those ancient civilisations, which modern science is attempting to link with the primitive times when humanity had no history. But if the source is common, the transformations—progressive or regres-

sive—which each people effects, according to its mental constitution, in the elements it borrows are very varied ; and it is the history of these transformations that constitutes the history of civilisation.

We have just seen that the fundamental elements of which a civilisation is composed are peculiar to each people, that they are the result, the expression of its mental structure, and that in consequence they cannot pass from one race to another without undergoing the most profound changes. We have also seen that the extent of these changes is marked on the one hand by linguistic necessities which oblige us to employ the same words to designate very different things, and on the other hand by historical necessities which lead us to take into account only the extreme forms of a civilisation, and to neglect the intermediary forms by which they are connected. When studying, in the next chapter, the general laws of the evolution of the arts, we shall be able to show with still greater precision the succession of the changes which take place in the fundamental elements of a civilisation when they pass from one people to another.

## CHAPTER III

### HOW THE ARTS ARE TRANSFORMED

Application of the principles already set forth to the study of the evolution of the arts among the Oriental peoples—Egypt—The religious ideas from which its arts are derived—Developments that await its arts when they are transplanted amid different races: Ethiopians, Greeks, and Persians—Primitive inferiority of Grecian art—Slowness of its evolution—Adoption and evolution in Persia of Grecian art, Egyptian art, and Assyrian art—The transformations undergone by the arts depend on the race and not on religious beliefs—Examples supplied by the great transformations undergone by Arabian art according to the races which have adopted Islamism—Application of our principles to the investigation of the origin and evolution of the arts in India—India and Greece went to the same sources, but in consequence of the diversity of the races they developed arts having no relationship—Immense transformations undergone by architecture in India among the different races in spite of the similarity of their beliefs.

IN examining the relations between the mental constitution of a people, its institutions, its beliefs, and its language, I have had to confine myself to brief indications. To elucidate such subjects, it would be necessary to pile up volumes.

In the case of the arts, a clear and precise state-



ment is infinitely easier. Institutions and beliefs are matters whose definition is doubtful, whose interpretation is obscure. The reality, which changes with every epoch, has to be searched for in the ancient texts in which it lies concealed, and laborious argumentation and criticism must be resorted to in order to arrive at conclusions which, at the finish, are open to discussion. Works of art, and in particular monuments, are very definite objects, and easy of interpretation. The books of stone are the most luminous of books, the only books that never lie, and it is for this reason that I have given them a preponderant place in my works on the history of the civilisations of the East. I have always held literary documents in the utmost suspicion. They are often deceptive and they rarely instruct. The monument rarely deceives and is always instructive. The monument is the best guardian of the thought of vanished peoples, and the mental blindness is to be pitied of the specialists who concern themselves solely with the inscriptions it may bear.

Let us now proceed to study in what respect arts are the expression of the mental constitution of a people, and what are the transformations they undergo in passing from one civilisation to another.

In this inquiry, I shall consider only the Eastern arts. The genesis and the transformation of the European arts have been subjected to identical laws; but to follow their evolution among the various races it would be necessary to enter into details which would be beyond the very restricted scope of this work.

Let us take, to begin with, the arts of Egypt, and examine the destiny that awaited them among three different races among which they were successively transplanted: the negroes of Ethiopia, the Greeks, and the Persians.

Of all the civilisations that have flourished on the globe, that of Egypt has found the most complete expression in the arts. It is expressed therein with such force and clearness that the artistic types that saw the light on the banks of the Nile could only be suitable to the Egyptians, and were not adopted by other peoples until they had been considerably transformed.

The Egyptian arts, and more especially the Egyptian architecture, were the outcome of an ideal, peculiar to the race, which for fifty centuries was the constant pre-occupation of an entire people. The dream of the Egyptians was to create for man an imperishable dwelling in contrast with his ephemeral

existence. This race, unlike, in this respect, to all other races, despised life, and courted death. What interested it more than anything else was the motionless mummy which, its eyes of enamel incrusting in its golden mask, gazed eternally, from the depths of its gloomy resting place, on mysterious hieroglyphics. Guarded in its sepulchral dwelling, vast as a palace, against all profanation, the mummy was surrounded on the painted and sculptured walls of endless corridors by all that had charmed it during its brief terrestrial existence.

Egyptian architecture is more especially a funereal and religious architecture, having more or less for its object the mummy and the Gods. For them it is that the subterranean vaults were excavated, that the obelisks, the pylones, and the pyramids were raised, and for them that the pensive giants reclined on their thrones of stone in a pose so majestic and so harmonious.

Everything about this architecture is stable and massive because it aimed at being eternal. If the Egyptians were the only people of antiquity with which we were acquainted, it could indeed be said that art is the most faithful expression of the soul of the race of which it is the creation.



Peoples differing widely from one another—the Ethiopians, an inferior race; the Greeks and the Persians, superior races—have borrowed their arts either from Egypt alone, or from Egypt and Assyria. Let us see what they became in their hands.

Let us deal, to begin with, with the inferior people we have just mentioned—with the Ethiopians.

It is known that at a late period in Egyptian history (that of the twenty-fourth dynasty), the peoples of the Soudan, taking advantage of the anarchy and decadence of Egypt, seized some of its provinces and founded a kingdom which, having Napata and Meroe successively for its capital, maintained its independence for several centuries. Dazzled by the civilisation of the vanquished people, they endeavoured to copy their monuments and arts; but these copies, of which we possess specimens, are for the most part but very rude efforts. These negroes were barbarians, condemned by their mental inferiority never to shake off their barbarism: and in spite of the civilising influence of the Egyptians, it is a fact that they never did shake it off. There is no example in ancient or modern history of a negro people having reached a certain level of civilisation; and on every occasion when a superior civilisation, by one of



those accidents which in ancient times occurred in Ethiopia, and in modern times in Haiti, has fallen into the hands of the negro race, this civilisation has speedily reverted to wretchedly inferior forms.

Under a very different latitude, another race, also barbarian at the time, but a white race, that of the Greeks, borrowed from Egypt and Assyria the first models of its arts and confined itself at first to making crude copies. The artistic productions of these two great civilisations were furnished the Greeks by the Phœnicians, who were masters of the sea routes that connect the shores of the Mediterranean, and by the peoples of Asia Minor, the masters of the land routes that lead to Nineveh and Babylon.

Everybody is aware how immeasurably the Greeks surpassed their models in the end. The discoveries of modern archæology have shown, however, how rude were their first attempts, and that they required centuries before they came to produce the masterpieces which have made them immortal. The Greeks devoted some seven hundred years to this difficult task of converting a foreign art into a personal and superior art; but the progress realised during the last century is more considerable than that effected during all the preceding ages. It is not the superior

stages of civilisation, but the inferior stages that a people finds the most difficulty in surmounting. The most ancient productions of Greek art, those discovered at Mycenæ and belonging to the twelfth century before our era, point to entirely barbarian efforts, and are rude copies of Oriental objects; six centuries later Greek art is still very Oriental; the Apollo of Tenea and the Apollo of Orchomenes bear a singular resemblance to the Egyptian statues; but the progress now becomes very rapid, and, a century later, we reach Phidias and the marvellous statues of the Parthenon—that is to say, an art that has thrown off the influence of the East, while it is very superior to the models to which it had gone so long for inspiration.

Architecture followed a like evolution, though its successive steps are less easily established. We are ignorant of what the palaces of the Homeric poems, belonging to about the ninth century before our era, may have been like; but the bronze walls, the pinnacles brilliant with colour, the animals in gold and silver guarding the doors, of which the poet tells us, make us think at once of the Assyrian palaces covered with plates of bronze and enamelled bricks, and guarded by sculptured bulls. In any case, we know that the type of the most ancient Greek Doric

columns, which seem to date from the seventh century, is met with in Egypt at Karnak and Beni-Hassan ; that several of the details of the Ionic column are borrowed from Assyria ; but we also know that these foreign elements, to some extent superimposed at first, then blended, and finally transformed, gave rise to new columns very different from their primitive models.

At another extremity of the ancient world, Persia will offer us the example of an analogous adoption and evolution, though of an evolution that remained incomplete, because it was suddenly interrupted by foreign conquest. Persia did not have seven centuries, as Greece did, but only two hundred years, in which to create an art. So far only one people, the Arabs, has been successful in giving birth to a personal art in so short a time.

The history of Persian civilisation scarcely begins before Cyrus and his successors, who succeeded, five centuries before our era, in taking possession of Babylon and Egypt, that is of the two great cities of civilisation, whose glory illumined at the time the Eastern world. The Greeks, who were to wield the supremacy in their turn, did not count as yet. The Persian empire became the centre of civilisa-



tion until, three centuries before our era, it was overthrown by Alexander, whose conquest at once removed elsewhere the centre of the civilisation of the world. Without an art of their own, the Persians, when they had possessed themselves of Egypt and Babylon, borrowed artists and models from the conquered countries. Their empire having lasted but two centuries, they did not have time to modify these arts profoundly, but at the moment of their overthrow they had already begun to transform them. The ruins of Persepolis, which are still standing, acquaint us with the genesis of these transformations. We doubtless meet in them with the fusion, or rather with the superposition, of the arts of Egypt and Assyria, mingled with some Greek elements; but new elements, notably the lofty Persepolitan column with its bicephalous capitals, are already present, and authorise the belief that if the Persians had disposed of a longer interval of time, this superior race would have created an art as personal, if not as lofty, as that of the Greeks.

This supposition is supported by an examination of the monuments of Persia dating from a period ten centuries later. To the dynasty of the Achæmenides, overthrown by Alexander, succeeded that of the



Seleucides, then that of the Arsacides, and finally that of the Sassanides, overthrown in the seventh century by the Arabs. With the advent of these latter conquerors, Persia acquires a new architecture, and when it again raises monuments they offer an incontestable imprint of originality, the result of a combination of Arabian art with the ancient architecture of the Achæmenides, modified by its combination with the somewhat Grecian art of the Arsacides (gigantic doorways taking in the entire height of the façade, enamelled bricks, ogival arcades, etc.). It was this new art that the Mongols were to transport into India and to modify in their turn.

In the preceding examples we see the varying degrees of transformation which a people can effect in the arts of another people, according to the race and to the time it has been able to devote to this transformation.

In the case of an inferior race, the Æthiopians, although it had centuries at its disposal, we have seen that the borrowed art was made to return to an inferior form, the race being endowed with insufficient brain capacity. In the case of a race both superior and with centuries in which to operate, we have

observed a complete transformation of the ancient art into a new and very superior art. In the case of another race, the Persians, not ranking so high as the Greeks, and who were limited in the matter of time, we have merely encountered great skill of adaptation and the beginnings of a transformation.

Apart, however, from the examples, most of them distant, which we have just cited, there are many others more modern, of which the specimens are still standing, and which show the magnitude of the transformations a race is compelled to effect in the arts it borrows. These examples are the more typical, in that they are furnished by peoples professing the same religion but of different origin. I refer to the Mussulmans.

When the Arabs possessed themselves of the greater part of the old world in the seventh century of our era, and founded the gigantic empire which soon stretched from Spain to the centre of Asia and included the north of Africa, they found themselves in presence of a clearly defined architecture: the Byzantine architecture. At first they simply adopted it for the edification of their mosques both in Spain, Egypt, and Syria. The mosque of Omar at Jeru-

saïem, that of Amrou at Cairo, and other monuments still standing show us this adoption. However, it did not last long, and in the various countries the monuments are seen to be transformed from century to century. We have shown the genesis of these changes in our "*History of the Civilisation of the Arabs*." They are so considerable, that there is no trace of resemblance between a monument of the early years of the conquest, such as the mosque of Amrou at Cairo (742), and one of the close of the great Arabian period, such as the mosque of Kait-Bey (1468). We have shown in our explanations and diagrams that, in the different countries subjected to the rule of Islam—Spain, Africa, Syria, Persia, India—the monuments present differences so considerable that it is really impossible to class them under the same denomination, as can be done, for example, in the case of the Gothic monuments which, in spite of their varieties, offer evident analogies.

These radical differences in the architecture of the Mussulman countries cannot be the result of diversity of beliefs, since the religion is the same; it is the result of racial divergencies whose influence on the evolution of the arts is as profound as it is on the destinies of empires.



If this assertion is exact, we ought to expect to find very dissimilar monuments in a country inhabited by different races, even in the face of identical beliefs and unity of political domination. This is precisely the phenomenon that is observed in India. It is in India that it is easiest to find examples in support of the general principles set forth in this work, and it is for this reason that I am always referring to the great peninsular, which constitutes the most suggestive and the most philosophic of books of history. At the present day it is the only country in which, merely by travelling from one spot to another, it is possible to go from age to age and to gaze on the still existing series of successive stages which humanity has had to traverse to reach the higher levels of civilisation. All the forms of evolution are met with in India: the stone age has its representatives there, and so too has the age of electricity and steam. Nowhere can a better view be obtained of those great factors which preside over the genesis and evolution of civilisations.

It is by applying the principles developed in the present work that I have attempted to solve a problem to which the key has long been sought: the origin of the arts of India. The subject being



very little known and constituting an interesting application of our ideas on the psychology of races, we shall here sum up its most essential lines.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the arts, India does not make its appearance in history until very late. Its oldest monuments, such as the columns of Asoka, the temples of Karli, Bharhut, Sanchi, etc., scarcely date further back than two centuries before our era. When they were constructed the majority of the old civilisations of the ancient world, those of Egypt, Persia, and Assyria, even that of Greece itself, had terminated their cycle and entered the night of decadence. A single civilisation, that of Rome, had replaced all the others. The world knew but one master.

India, which emerged so tardily from the shadows of history, was in a position then to borrow much from anterior civilisations. The profound isolation, however, in which it was formerly admitted the country had always lived, and the astonishing originality of its monuments, which possess no visible

<sup>1</sup> For technical details which cannot even be touched on here I shall refer the reader to my work, *Les Monuments de l'Inde*, one vol. in folio, illustrated by four hundred plates from my own photographs, plans, and drawings (Didot). Many of these plates are given on a reduced scale in my work *Les Civilisations dans l'Inde*, 4to, 800 pages.

relationship with any of those that had preceded them, long resulted in the hypothesis of borrowings from abroad being set aside.

Side by side with their indisputable originality, the early Indian monuments display a superiority of execution which they were not destined to surpass in the lapse of centuries. Works of so high a degree of perfection had doubtless been preceded by long anterior tentative efforts; and yet, in spite of the most minute researches, no monument of an inferior order revealed the trace of these efforts.

The recent discovery, in certain isolated regions of the north-west of the peninsular, of *débris* of statues and monuments clearly revealing Greek influences, had ended by inducing Indian antiquarians to believe that India had borrowed its arts from Greece.

The application of the principles set forth above and the most careful study of the majority of the monuments still existing in India have led us to quite a different conclusion. India, in our opinion, in spite of its accidental contact with Greek civilisation, borrowed none of its arts from Greece and could not borrow any of them from this source. The differences between the two races were too great, their thought

was too unlike, their artistic geniuses were too incompatible for them to have influenced one another.

The examination of the ancient monuments scattered over India shows, moreover, immediately that there is no relationship between its arts and those of Greece. Whereas our European monuments are full of elements borrowed from Grecian art, the monuments of India present absolutely no such elements. The most superficial study proves that we are in presence of extremely different races, and that geniuses more unlike—I would even say more antipathetic—have never perhaps existed than the Greek genius and the Hindu genius.

This general notion is merely accentuated when a more thorough and penetrating study is made of the monuments of India and of the inner psychology of the peoples that created them. It is soon observed that the Hindu genius is too personal for it to undergo a foreign influence at variance with its thought. Doubtless such a foreign influence can be imposed by force; but however long it may be supposed to last, it remains exceedingly superficial and transitory. It would seem as if between the mental constitution of the peoples of India and that of other peoples, there were barriers as great as the formidable



obstacles created by nature between the great peninsula and the other countries of the globe. The Hindu genius is so specific that, whatever be the object necessity obliges it to imitate, the object is immediately transformed and becomes Hindu. Even in architecture, where it is nevertheless difficult to conceal borrowings, the personality of this strange genius, this faculty of rapid modification is quick to reveal itself. It is possible, no doubt, to make a Hindu architect copy a Greek column, but he will not be prevented from transforming it rapidly into a column which at first sight will be said to be Hindu. Even at the present day, though European influence is now so powerful in India, such transformations are daily observable. If a Hindu artist be given any European model to copy, he will adopt its general form, but he will exaggerate certain parts, and multiply and disfigure the ornamental details, so that the second or third copy will have dropped all the Western characteristics and will have become exclusively Hindu.

The fundamental characteristic of Hindu architecture—a characteristic also found in Hindu literature, which for this reason is closely allied to Hindu architecture—is an overflowing exaggeration, an



infinite richness of detail, a complexity which is the very antipodes of the correct and severe simplicity of Grecian art. It is more especially in studying the arts of India that it is understood to what an extent the plastic works of a race are often allied to its mental constitution, and constitute the clearest of languages for those who know how to interpret them. If the Hindus, like the Assyrians, had entirely disappeared from history, the bas-reliefs of their temples, their statues, their monuments would suffice to reveal to us their past. What they would tell us in particular is that the clear and methodic genius of the Greeks had never been able to exercise the slightest influence on the overflowing and unmethodical imagination of the Hindus. They would also make us understand why Grecian influence in India could never be other than transitory and was always limited to the region in which it was momentarily imposed by force.

The study from an archæological point of view of the monuments of India has enabled us to confirm by precise documents what is revealed immediately by a general knowledge of India and the Hindu genius. It has enabled us to establish the curious fact that, on several occasions, notably during the first two cen-

turies of our era, the Hindu sovereigns in communication with the Arsacides dynasty of Persia, whose civilisation bore a strong Grecian impress, desired to introduce Grecian art into India, but never succeeded in making it take root.

This borrowed and wholly official art, which bore no relation to the thought of the people among whom it had been introduced, always disappeared with the political influences that had given birth to it. Moreover it was too antipathetic to the Hindu genius to have exerted any influence on the national art even during the period during which it was imposed by force. No traces of Greek influence are found in the contemporary or posterior Hindu monuments, in the subterranean temples for example. On the other hand, they would be far too easily discerned for it to be possible to pass them over. Apart from the general aspect which is always characteristic, there are technical details, the treatment of the draperies in particular, which at once reveal the hand of a Greek artist.

The disappearance of Greek art in India was as sudden as its apparition, and this very suddenness shows how entirely it was an imported art, officially imposed but without affinity with the people that

had been obliged to accept it. Arts never disappear in this way from amongst a people ; they transform themselves, and the new art always borrows something from that of which it has taken the place. After suddenly appearing in India, Greek art as suddenly disappeared without exerting any influence whatever, exactly as has been the case with the European monuments erected in the country by the English during the past two centuries.

The fact that at the present day the European arts exert no influence in India may be compared with the exceeding slightness of the influence of the Greek arts there eighteen centuries ago. It cannot be denied that we have here a case of incompatibility of æsthetic sentiments, for the Mussulman arts, although quite as foreign to India as the European arts, have been imitated throughout the peninsula. Even in those parts of the country where the Mussulmans have never exercised any power, it is rare to come across a temple that does not contain some traces of Arabian ornamentation. Doubtless, as in the distant times of King Kanishka, we see rajahs at the present day, such as the Rajah of Gwalior, attracted by the might of the foreigners, build themselves European palaces in the Greco-Latin style,



but—again as in the time of Kanishka—this official art, superposed on the indigenous art, is totally without influence on the latter.

Greek and Hindu art, then, formerly existed side by side, like European art and Hindu art at the present day, but without ever influencing one another. So far as the monuments of India properly so called are concerned, there is not one of them of which it can be said that it offers, either in its general aspect or in its details, any resemblance whatever, however remote, with a Greek monument.

This powerlessness of Grecian art to implant itself in India is striking, and it must needs be attributed to the incompatibility we have pointed out between the soul of the two races, and not to a sort of incapacity native to India to assimilate a foreign art, for the country has shown itself perfectly able to assimilate and transform the arts that corresponded to its mental constitution.

The archæological documents that we have been able to collect show that Persia was the source from which India derived its arts; not the slightly Hellenised Persia of the time of the Arsacides, but the Persia that had inherited the old civilisations



of Egypt and Assyria. It is known that when Alexander overthrew the dynasty of the Achæmenides, 330 B.C., the Persians had already been in possession for two centuries of a brilliant civilisation. Doubtless they had not discovered the formula of a new art, but the mixture of the arts of Egypt and Assyria which they had inherited had produced remarkable works. We can judge them by the still existing ruins of Persepolis, which show us by their Egyptian pylones, their Assyrian winged bulls, and even some Grecian elements, that all the arts of the great anterior civilisations had mingled their influences in this limited region of Asia.

India, then, borrowed its arts from Persia, but it borrowed them in reality from the sources to which Persia itself had gone, from Chaldæa and Egypt.

The study of the monuments of India reveals the borrowings on which they lived originally, but to establish these borrowings the most ancient monuments must be examined, for the Hindu genius is so specific, that the borrowed elements, in order to adapt themselves to it, undergo such transformations that they soon become unrecognisable.

Why is it that India, which has shown itself so incapable of borrowing anything whatever from

Greece, has shown itself, on the contrary, so disposed to borrow from Persia? The reason evidently is that the Persian arts corresponded to its mental structure, whereas there was no such correspondence in the case of the arts of Greece. The simple forms and the sparsely ornamented surfaces of the Grecian monuments could not appeal to the Hindu genius, which was attracted, on the contrary, by the complicated forms, the exuberant decoration, and the wealth of ornament of the Persian monuments.

Moreover, it is not solely at this distant epoch, anterior to our era, that Persia, representing Egypt and Assyria, exerted an influence on India by its arts. When, many centuries later, the Mussulmans appeared in the peninsula, their civilisation, during its passage through Persia, had been deeply imbued with Persian elements; and it brought to India in reality a Persian art still bearing traces of those old Assyrian traditions which had been continued by the dynasty of Achæmenides. The gigantic doorways of the mosques, and especially the enamelled bricks with which the mosques are lined externally, are vestiges of the Chaldæo-Assyrian civilisation. India was able to assimilate these arts so well, because they were in accordance with the genius of

its race ; whereas Greek art in the past and European art at the present day, being utterly opposed to its mode of thinking and feeling, have always remained without influence on the national productions.

It is not, then, with Greece, as the archæologists still maintain, but with Egypt and Assyria—through the medium of Persia—that India is linked. India has borrowed nothing from Greece, but both have gone to the same sources, to that common treasure, the foundation of all civilisations, brought into being in the course of centuries by the peoples of Egypt and Chaldæa. The borrowings of Greece were effected through the medium of the Phœnicians and of the peoples of Asia Minor ; those of India through the medium of Persia. The civilisations of Greece and India hark back in this way to a common source ; but the currents that issued from this source in the two countries speedily took very different directions, in harmony with the genius of either race.

If, however, as we have asserted, the art of a race is in close correspondence with its mental constitution, and if for this reason the same art borrowed by dissimilar races at once assumes very different forms, we should expect to find that India, a country inhabited by a great variety of races, is in posses-



sion of very different arts, and of styles of architecture that bear no resemblance to one another, in spite of the identity of beliefs.

An examination of the monuments of the different regions of India shows how entirely this is the case. Indeed, the differences between the monuments are so profound, that the only classification of the monuments we have been able to make is based on regions, that is on racial distinctions, and is quite independent of the religion to which the peoples who have constructed them have belonged. There is no analogy between the monuments of the north of India and those of the south, constructed though they were at the same period by peoples professing a similar religion. Even during the Mussulman domination, at a period, that is, when the political unity of India was most complete, and the influence of the central authority at its maximum, the purely Mussulman monuments present profound differences according to the region in which they are found. The mosques of Ahmedabad, Lahore, Agra, or Bijapour, although devoted to the same cult, offer but a very slight relationship, a much slighter relationship than that which connects a monument of the Renaissance with those of the Gothic period.



It is not architecture only that varies in India according to the race ; the statuary also varies with the different regions, not merely as regards the types represented, but especially in respect to the way in which they are treated. If the bas-reliefs or the statues of Sanchi be compared with those of Bharhut, with which they are nevertheless contemporary, the difference is already manifest. It is plainer still when the statues and bas-reliefs of the province of Orissa are compared with those of Bundelkund, or, again, the statues of Mysore with those of the great pagodas of the South of India. The influence of race is everywhere apparent. It is seen, moreover, in the most trifling artistic productions, which, as everybody is aware, differ immensely in India from one region to another. It is not necessary to be very expert to distinguish between a coffer in carved wood of Mysore workmanship and a coffer that hails from the Guzrat district, or between a jewel from the province of Orissa and a jewel from that of Bombay.

Doubtless the architecture of India, like all Oriental architecture, is principally religious ; but however great religious influence may be, especially in the East, the influence of race is much more considerable.



This soul of the race, which guides the destinies of peoples, determines as well their beliefs, institutions, and arts; whatever be the element of civilisation under consideration, its action is always perceptible. It is the only force against which no other force can prevail. It represents the dead weight of thousands of generations, the synthesis of their thought.



### **BOOK III**

*THE HISTORY OF PEOPLES CONSIDERED AS A  
CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR CHARACTER*





### BOOK III

#### *THE HISTORY OF PEOPLES CONSIDERED AS A CONSEQUENCE OF THEIR CHARACTER*

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#### CHAPTER I

##### HOW THE SOUL OF PEOPLES IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR INSTITUTIONS

The history of a people is always determined by its mental constitution—

Various examples—How the political institutions of France are the outcome of the soul of the race—Their real invariability beneath their apparent variability—Our most different political parties pursue identical political ends under different names—Their ideal is always centralisation and the destruction of individual initiative to the profit of the State—How the French Revolution merely executed the programme of the old monarchy—Contrast between the ideal of the Anglo-Saxon race and the Latin ideal—The initiative of the citizen substituted for the initiative of the State—Peoples' institutions are always the outcome of their character.

**H**ISTORY in its main lines may be regarded as the mere statement of the results engendered by the psychological constitution of races. It is determined by this constitution, just as the respira-

tory organs of fish are determined by their aquatic life. In the absence of a preliminary knowledge of the mental constitution of a people, its history appears a chaos of events governed by hazard. On the contrary, when we are acquainted with the soul of a people, its life is seen to be the regular and inevitable consequence of its psychological characteristics. In all the manifestations of the life of a people, we always find the unchangeable soul of the race weaving itself its own destiny.

It is more especially in political institutions that the sovereign power of the soul of the race manifests itself the most visibly. It will be easy for us to prove this statement by a few examples.

Let us, to start with, take France, that is one of the countries of the world which has been subjected to the most profound upheavals, a country in which in a few years the political institutions seem to have changed most radically, in which the parties seem the most divergent. If we consider from the psychological point of view these apparently so dissimilar opinions, these perpetually struggling parties, we note that they possess in reality a perfectly identical common substratum which exactly represents the ideal of our race. Intransigents, Radicals, Monarch-

ists, Socialists, in a word all the champions of the most diverse doctrines, pursue, though they give themselves different names, an absolutely identical end: the absorption of the individual by the State. What they all of them desire with a like ardour is the old centralised and Cæsarian *régime*, the State directing everything, ordaining everything, absorbing everything, regulating the smallest details of the life of the citizens, and thus freeing them from the necessity of displaying the least glimmer of reflection and initiative. Whether the authority placed at the head of the State is called king, emperor, president, etc., is of no importance; this authority, whatever it be, will perforce have the same ideal, and this ideal is the same expression of the sentiments of the soul of the race.<sup>1</sup> And the race would tolerate no other.

While, then, our extreme excitability, the extreme ease with which we become discontented with our surroundings, the idea that a new Government will render our lot happier, lead us to be always changing our institutions, the mighty voice of the dead which

<sup>1</sup> "Such," writes a highly judicious observer, Dupont White, "is the singular genius of France: the character of the people precludes its succeeding in certain matters, either essential or desirable, which bear on the ornamental or fundamental side of civilisation, unless it be sustained or stimulated in the enterprise by its Government."

guides us condemns us to change but words and appearances. The unconscious power of the soul of our race is such that we do not even perceive the illusion of which we are the victims.

Nothing assuredly, if only appearances be considered, is more different from the old *régime* than the *régime* created by the Great Revolution. In reality, however, the Revolution, though doubtless unawares, did no more than continue the monarchical tradition, by completing the work of centralisation begun by the monarchy centuries previously. Were Louis XIII. and Louis XIV. to rise from their tombs to judge the work of the Revolution, they would doubtless blame some of the acts of violence which accompanied its realisation, but they would consider it to be in rigorous conformity with their tradition and their programme, and they would allow that a minister entrusted with the execution of this programme could not have carried it out more successfully. They would declare that the least revolutionary government France has known was precisely that of the Revolution. They would further note that none of the various *régimes* that have succeeded one another in France for a century past has attempted to tamper with this



work, so entirely is it the fruit of a regular evolution, the continuation of the monarchical ideal and the expression of the genius of the race. Doubtless these illustrious phantoms, in consequence of their great experience, would offer some criticisms, would perhaps remark, for example, that the substitution of an administrative caste for the aristocratic governing caste has created in the State an impersonal power that is more redoubtable than the old nobility, since it is the sole power which, being untouched by political changes, is in possession of traditions and of an *esprit de corps*, while it is irresponsible and perpetual—conditions which necessarily lead to its becoming the sole master. However, they would not dwell, I fancy, to any great extent on this objection, for they would be mindful of the fact that the Latin peoples care very little for liberty, but a great deal for equality, and put up with all despotisms without difficulty provided they be impersonal. Perhaps, too, they would consider excessive and very tyrannical the innumerable regulations, the thousand and one obligations which surround at the present day the most insignificant acts of existence, and they would perhaps observe that when the State has absorbed everything, regulated everything, and

despoiled the citizens of all initiative, we shall find ourselves spontaneously, and without any fresh revolution, involved in out and out Socialism. But at this stage of their reflection, the divine perspicacity that enlightens kings, or, in its absence, the mathematical principle that effects increase in geometrical progression when their causes subsist, will allow them to perceive that Socialism is nothing else than the ultimate expression of the monarchical idea, of which the Revolution was merely an accelerative phase.

Thus it is that, in the institutions of a people, we meet both with those accidental circumstances referred to in the beginning of this work, and those permanent laws which we have attempted to determine. The accidental circumstances give rise to the names and appearances. The fundamental laws—and the most fundamental of them arise from the character of peoples—create the destiny of nations.

With the preceding example, we may contrast that of another race, the English race, whose psychological constitution is very different from our own. Merely in consequence of this fact its constitutions are radically distinct from ours.

Whether the English have at their head a monarch as in England, or a president as in the United States,

their government will always present the same fundamental characteristics: the action of the State will be reduced to a minimum and that of private individuals carried to a maximum, a state of things which is the precise contrary of the Latin ideal. Harbours, canals, railways, educational establishments, etc., will always be created and kept up by the initiative of private individuals and never by that of the State.<sup>\*</sup> There are no revolutions, constitutions, or despots that can give to a people which does not possess them, or take from a people which does possess them, the qualities of character of which its institutions are the outcome. It has often been said that peoples have the governments they deserve. Is it conceivable that it should be otherwise?

We shall soon show by other examples that a people does not escape the consequences of its mental constitution; or that if it throws off this influence it is only for a brief moment, as the sand swept up by a storm seems for an instant to be rebellious to the laws of attraction. It is a childish chimera to believe that governments and constitu-

<sup>\*</sup> This preponderance of individual initiative should more especially be observed in America. It has singularly decreased in the last twenty-five years in England, where the encroachments of the State are becoming more and more marked.



tions count for anything in the destinies of a people. The destiny of a people lies in itself, and not in exterior circumstances. All that can be asked of a government is that it shall be the expression of the sentiments and ideas of the people it is called on to govern, and by the mere fact that it exists, it is the image of the people. There are no governments or constitutions of which it can be said that they are absolutely good or absolutely bad. The government of the King of Dahomey was probably an excellent government for the people he was called on to rule over, and the most ingenious European constitution would have been inferior for his people. This truth is unfortunately ignored by statesmen who imagine that a mode of government can be exported, and that colonies can be governed with the institutions of a metropolis. It would be as futile to wish to persuade fish to live in the air, under the pretext that aerial respiration is practised by all the superior animals.

By the mere fact of the diversity of their mental constitution, different peoples cannot long exist under an identical *régime*. The Irish and the English, the Slav and the Hungarian, the Arab and the Frenchman, are only maintained with the utmost difficulty



under the same laws and at the cost of incessant revolutions. Great empires, embracing diverse peoples, have always been condemned to an ephemeral existence. When they have endured for some length of time, as the Mongolian Empire did, or as that of the English in India has done, it is on the one hand because the races in contact were so numerous, so different, and in consequence separated by such rivalries that it was impossible that they should unite against the foreigner; and it was on the other hand because these foreign masters have had a sufficiently sure political instinct to respect the customs of the conquered peoples and to allow them to live under their own laws.

Many books would have to be written, indeed history would have to be entirely recast and considered from quite a new standpoint, if it were desired to show all the consequences of the psychological constitution of peoples. A close study of this constitution ought to be the basis of politics and education. It might even be said that this study would avert many errors and many upheavals, if peoples could escape the fatalities of their race, if the voice of reason were not always extinguished by the imperious voice of the dead.



## CHAPTER II

### APPLICATION OF THE PRECEDING PRINCIPLES TO THE COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA AND OF THE SPANISH-AMERICAN REPUBLICS

The English character—How the American soul has been formed—  
Severity of the selection resulting from the conditions of existence  
—Forced disappearance of the inferior elements—The negroes  
and the Chinese—Reasons of the prosperity of the United States  
and of the decadence of the Spanish-American republics in spite of  
identical political institutions—Inevitable anarchy of the Spanish-  
American republics as a consequence of the inferiority of the  
characteristics of the race.

THE brief considerations which precede show  
that the institutions of a people are the expres-  
sion of its soul, and that while it is easy for a people  
to change their form it is impossible for it to change  
their essence. We are now going to show by very  
precise examples to what a degree the soul of a

people determines its destiny, and how insignificant is the rôle played by institutions in this destiny.<sup>1</sup>

I shall go for these examples to a country in which there exist side by side, under conditions of environment but slightly different, two European races equally civilised and intelligent, and only differing as regards their character: I refer to America. This continent is formed by two distinct continents united by an isthmus. The superficies of each of these continents is very nearly equal, and their soil not at all unlike. One of them has been conquered and peopled by the English, the other by the Spanish race. These two races live under similar republican institutions, since the republics of South America have always modelled their institutions on those of the United

<sup>1</sup> The illustrious English sociologist, Herbert Spencer, had neglected in his great works the influence of the character of peoples on their destinies, and his admirable theoretical syntheses had led him at first to very optimistic conclusions. Having decided as he became older to take into consideration the fundamental rôle of character, he has had to modify entirely his earlier conclusions, and has finally been brought to substitute for them extremely pessimistic conclusions. We find them expressed in a recently published discourse on Tyndall, reprinted in the *Revue des Revues*. Here are some extracts:

"... My faith in free institutions, so strong to begin with, has considerably diminished of late years. . . . We are going back to the régime of the iron hand represented by the bureaucratic despotism of a socialist organisation, and then by the military despotism which will succeed it, supposing this latter not to be realised suddenly as the outcome of some acute social crisis."

States. In consequence, to explain the different destinies of these peoples we have nothing to go on but racial differences. Let us consider the results these differences have produced.

To begin with, let us summarise in a few words the characteristics of the Anglo-Saxon race which has peopled the United States. There is no race, perhaps, in the world which is so homogeneous, and whose mental constitution it is so easy to define in its main lines.

The dominant features of this mental constitution from the point of view of character are: a degree of will power which very few peoples, with the exception perhaps of the Romans, have possessed, an indomitable energy, very great initiative, absolute self-control, a sentiment of independence carried to the pitch of excessive unsociability, immense activity, very lively religious sentiments, a very stable morality, and a very clear idea of duty.

From the intellectual point of view, it is impossible to give special characteristics, that is to say to point out special elements, not to be found in the other civilised nations. There is little to note beyond a sureness of judgment which allows of the grasping of the practical and positive side of things and keeps



those who possess it from losing their way in chimerical researches: a strong liking for facts and but little taste for general ideas, a certain narrowness of mind which prevents the recognition of the weak sides of religious beliefs, and in consequence ensures those beliefs escaping discussion.

To these general characteristics must be added a complete optimism with regard to the path the individual has traced himself in life, which leads him never even to suppose that he could possibly have chosen a better. He is always aware of what is demanded of him by his country, his family, his Gods. This optimism is carried to the pitch of regarding whatever is foreign as extremely contemptible. Contempt for the foreigner and his customs certainly surpasses in England that formerly professed by the Romans and Barbarians at the time of their greatness. So great is it, that as regards the foreigner every rule of morality ceases to hold good. There is not an English statesman who does not consider as perfectly legitimate, in his conduct towards other peoples, acts which would provoke the deepest and the most unanimous indignation if they were practised where his countrymen were concerned. This contempt for the foreigner is doubtless a sentiment of a very inferior

order from the philosophic point of view ; but from the point of view of the prosperity of a people it is extremely useful. As Lord Wolseley, the well-known English general, has rightly remarked, it is one of the sentiments that make the strength of England. It has been said with reason, in connection with their refusal—their very judicious refusal be it remarked—to allow the construction of a tunnel under the Channel, which would facilitate communications with the Continent, that the English take as much trouble as the Chinese to prevent the penetration into their country of all foreign influence.

All the characteristics which have just been enumerated are met with in the various social grades ; it would be impossible to light on any element of English civilisation on which they have not left their mark. The foreigner who visits England, if only for a few days, is at once struck by this fact. He will note the desire for an independent life in the cottage of the most humble employé, a confined dwelling, no doubt, but in which the householder is exposed to no restraint and is isolated from his neighbours ; in the busiest railway stations in which the public is free to circulate at all hours, not being penned in, like a flock of docile sheep, behind a barrier guarded by an

employé, as if it were necessary to assure by force the security of people, incapable themselves of the amount of attention necessary to keep them from being run over. He will recognise the energy of the race in the laboriousness of the workman, or in that of the schoolboy, left to himself while still quite young, and learning to look after himself without assistance, he being already well aware that in the course of his existence nobody will be concerned with his fate ; in the schoolmasters, who set comparatively little store on learning but attach great importance to character, which they hold to be one of the great motive forces of the world.<sup>1</sup> When he studies the public life of the citizen, he will see that it is not to the State but to private initiative that appeal is always made, whether it is a case of repairing a fountain or of constructing a harbour or a railway. Pursuing his inquiry, he will soon recognise that this

<sup>1</sup> Entrusted by the Queen of England with deciding the conditions on which the annual prize given by her to Wellington College should be awarded, Prince Albert ordered that it should be granted not to the scholar who had done best in his studies, but to the boy of best character. In the case of a Latin nation, the prize would certainly have been given to the pupil who repeated best what he had learned from his books. All our education, including what we term higher education, consists in making our youth recite lessons. The scholars retain the habit to such a degree that they continue to recite them during the rest of their existence.



people, in spite of defects which make it the most insufferable of peoples in the eyes of foreigners, is the only really free people, because it is the only people which, having learned to govern itself, has been able to leave only a minimum of action to its government. If its history be studied, it is seen that it was the first people to free itself from every kind of domination, from that of the Church as well as from that of kings. As early as the fifteenth century the legist Fortescue contrasted "the Roman law, the inheritance of the Latin peoples, with the English law: the one the work of absolute sovereigns, and wholly inclined to sacrifice the individual; the other the work of the will of the community, and ever ready to protect the individual."

To whatever quarter of the globe such a people may emigrate, it will at once acquire the preponderance, and found powerful empires. If the race it invades, as in the case of the Redskins of America, for example, is sufficiently weak, and insufficiently utilisable, it will be methodically exterminated. If the race invaded, as in the case of the population of India, is too numerous to be destroyed, and is capable moreover of doing productive work, it will simply be reduced to a very oppressive state of vassalage, and



obliged to labour for the almost exclusive advantage of its masters.

It is more especially, however, in a new country such as America, that the astonishing progress due to the mental constitution of the English race should be studied. Transported into uncultivated regions, sparsely inhabited by some few savages, it is notorious what its destiny has been. Scarcely a century has been necessary to raise the country to the front rank among the great powers of the world, and to-day there are few powers that would be a match for it. I advise those who are desirous of appreciating for themselves the enormous sum of initiative and individual energy expended by the citizens of the great Republic to read the books of MM. Rousier and Paul Bourget. The aptitude of the Americans to govern themselves, to unite together to found great enterprises, to create towns, schools, harbours, railways, etc., has arrived at such a pitch, and the action of the State has been reduced to such a minimum, that it might almost be said that no public authorities exist. Apart from filling police duties and those of diplomatic representation, it is even difficult to see what purpose they could serve.

It is impossible, moreover, for an individual to

prosper in the United States except on the condition that he possesses the qualities of character I have just described, and this is why the foreign immigrations are powerless to modify the general trend of mind of the race. The conditions of existence are such that the individuals who do not possess these qualities are condemned to disappear at an early date. Only the Anglo-Saxon can live in this atmosphere saturated with independence and energy. The Italian dies of starvation, and the Irishman and the negro vegetate in the most humble situations.

The great Republic is assuredly the land of liberty; it is assuredly the land neither of equality nor of fraternity, those two Latin chimeras which the laws of progress do not recognise. In no country on the globe has natural selection made its iron arm more rudely felt. It is unpitying; but it is precisely because it ignores pity that the race it has contributed to form retains its power and energy. There is no room for the weak, the mediocre, the incapable on the soil of the United States. By the mere fact that they are inferior, isolated individuals or entire races are destined to perish. The Redskin Indians, because useless, have been shot down, or condemned to die of hunger. The Chinese workmen,

whose labour constitutes a vexatious source of competition, will soon undergo a similar fate. The law decreeing their total expulsion has not been carried out because of the enormous expenses its application would entail.<sup>1</sup> Its place will doubtless soon be taken by a methodical destruction, already begun in several mining districts. Other laws have recently been voted, forbidding pauper emigrants to land on American territory. As to the negroes who served as the pretext for the War of Succession—a war between those who possessed slaves, and those who, being unable to possess them, did not wish to allow others to own them—they are almost tolerated because they fill none but subordinate positions which no American citizen would consent to accept. Theoretically they have rights; practically they are treated like semi-useful animals, who are got rid of as soon as they become dangerous. The summary proceedings of Lynch-law are universally recognised to meet their case. At their first crime of any gravity they are shot or hanged. Statistics,

<sup>1</sup> The Fifty-third Congress only adjourned the execution of the Geary law (Chinese Exclusion Act) because it found that to convey a hundred thousand Chinamen back to their country would involve an expenditure of thirty millions of francs, whereas the sum voted for the expulsion of the Chinese workmen was only one hundred thousand francs.



which only include a portion of these executions, give over a thousand for the last seven years.

These are doubtless the gloomy sides of the picture. It is brilliant enough to support them. If it were required to define in a word the difference between Continental Europe and the United States, it might be said that the first represents the maximum of what can result from official regulation replacing individual initiative; the second, the maximum of what can be effected by individual initiative entirely freed from all official regulation. These fundamental differences are exclusively the consequences of character. It is not on the soil of the rude Republic that European Socialism has a chance of implanting itself. The ultimate expression of State tyranny, it can only prosper among old races, subjected for centuries to a *régime* which has deprived them of all capacity for self-government.<sup>1</sup>

We have just seen what has been accomplished in

<sup>1</sup> The America I have just described is the America of yesterday and to-day, but it doubtless will not be that of to-morrow. We shall see in a forthcoming chapter that the country is threatened, in consequence of its recent invasion by an immense number of inferior and unassimilable elements, by a gigantic civil war, which may be followed by its division into several independent States, always fighting amongst themselves as are those of Europe.

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one portion of America by a race possessing a mental constitution of which the dominant features are perseverance, energy, and strength of will. It remains for us to show what has become of an almost similar country in the hands of another race, which, though highly intelligent, possesses none of the qualities of character whose effects I have just noted.

South America, as regards its natural productions, is one of the richest countries of the globe. Twice as large as Europe, and ten times less inhabited, there is no lack of land which is, so to speak, at the disposition of everybody. The dominant population, which is of Spanish origin, is divided into numerous republics: the republics of Argentina, Brazil, Chili, Peru, etc. All of them have adopted the political constitution of the United States, and live in consequence under identical laws. And yet, by the mere fact that the race is different and lacks the fundamental qualities possessed by the people of the United States, all these republics, without a single exception, are perpetually a prey to the most sanguinary anarchy, and in spite of the astonishing richness of their soil they are victims one after the other of every sort of political and economic disaster, of bankruptcy and despotism.

To appreciate the lengths reached by the decadence

of the Spanish-American republics, the remarkable and impartial work on the subject of Th. Child must be read. The causes of this decadence lie entirely in the mental constitution of a race possessing neither energy, strength of will, nor morality. The absence of morality, in particular, surpasses all we know that is worst in Europe. Citing one of the most important towns, Buenos Ayres, the author declares it to be uninhabitable by anybody of any delicacy of conscience or morality. In reference to one of the least degraded of the republics, the Argentine Republic, the same writer adds: "If this republic be studied from the commercial point of view, one is dumbfounded by the blatant immorality that is to be met with in every direction."

As to the institutions, there is no better example of how wholly they are the offspring of the race, and of the impossibility of transplanting them from one people to another. It was of great interest to know what would happen to the very liberal institutions of the United States after their introduction among an inferior race. "These countries," M. Child informs us of the various Spanish-American republics, "are under the ferule of Presidents who exercise an autocracy not less absolute than that of the Tzar of

all the Russias ; more absolute, indeed, for they have nothing to fear from the importunities and the influence of European censure. The Government officials are solely recruited from amongst their creatures ; . . . the citizens vote as they choose, but no account is paid to their votes. The Argentine Republic is a republic in name only ; in reality it is an oligarchy in the hands of persons who make a commerce of politics."

Only one country, Brazil, had to some extent escaped this decadence, thanks to a monarchical *régime* which kept the central authority from being the object of individual rivalries. This constitution, too liberal for races without energy and without will, has ended by succumbing. The result is that the country is a prey to utter anarchy. In the lapse of a few years, the dilapidation of the public finances by those in power has been such that the taxes have had to be increased by over sixty per cent.

Naturally, it is not in politics only that the decadence is manifest of the Latin race by which South America is peopled, but in all the other elements of civilisation as well. Left to themselves, these hapless republicans would revert to pure barbarism. All their industry and commerce is in



the hands of foreigners, of Englishmen, Americans, and Germans. Valparaiso has become an English city; and nothing would remain of Chili if the foreign element were to disappear. It is thanks to the foreigner that these countries still retain that external varnish of civilisation that still deceives Europe. The Argentine Republic counts four millions of whites of Spanish origin; I doubt whether a single white man, apart from foreigners, could be cited at the head of an important industry.

This terrible decadence of the Latin race, left to itself, compared with the prosperity of the English race in a neighbouring country, is one of the most sombre, the saddest, and, at the same time, the most instructive experiences that can be cited in support of the psychological laws that I have enunciated.



### CHAPTER III

#### HOW THE MODIFICATION OF THE SOUL OF RACES AFFECTS THE HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PEOPLES

The influence of foreign elements at once transforms the soul of a race, and in consequence its civilisation—Example of the Romans—Roman civilisation was not destroyed by military invasions, but by the pacific invasions of the Barbarians—The Barbarians never formed the project of destroying the Empire—Their invasions were not of the nature of conquests—The early Frank chiefs always considered themselves to be functionaries of the Roman Empire—They always respected Roman civilisation, and their aim was to continue it—It was only from the seventh century onwards that the Gallic barbarian chiefs ceased to consider the Emperor as their superior—The complete transformation of Roman civilisation was not the consequence of a work of destruction, but of the adoption of an ancient civilisation by a new race—The modern invasions of the United States—The civil strife and the breaking up of the United States into independent and rival States to which these invasions will lead—The invasion of France by foreigners and their consequences.

THE examples we have cited show that the history of a people does not depend on its institutions, but on its character—that is to say, on its

race. We further saw, when studying the formation of historical races, that their dissolution is the result of cross-breeding, and that the peoples which have preserved their unity and force—the Aryans, for example, in India in the past, and in modern times the English in their various colonies—are those who have always carefully avoided intermarrying with foreigners. The presence in the midst of a people of foreigners, even in small numbers, is sufficient to affect its soul, since it causes it to lose its capacity for defending the characteristics of its race, the monuments of its history, and the achievements of its ancestors.

This conclusion arises out of all of what precedes. If the various elements of a civilisation are to be regarded as the exterior manifestation of the soul of a people, it is evident that as soon as the soul of the people changes, its civilisation should change as well.

The history of the past supplies us with incontrovertible proof that this is what indeed occurs, and the history of the future will furnish many other such proofs.

The progressive transformation of Roman civilisation is one of the most striking examples it is possible to invoke. Historians usually picture this event as

the result of the destructive invasions of the Barbarians; but a more attentive study of the facts shows, on the one hand, that it was pacific and not warlike invasions which brought about the fall of the Empire; and, on the other hand, that the Barbarians, far from having wished to overthrow Roman civilisation, devoted all their efforts towards adopting and continuing institutions of which they were the respectful admirers. They essayed to appropriate the language, the institutions and the arts of Rome. Down to the time of the last of the Merovingians, they endeavoured to continue the great civilisation of which they were the heirs. This guiding intention is reflected in all the acts of the great Emperor Charlemagne.

We know, however, that such a task has always been impossible. The Barbarians needed several centuries before they could form, by repeated crosses and identical conditions of existence, a race in any way homogeneous; and when this race was formed it possessed, merely in virtue of the fact of its creation, a new language and new institutions, and in consequence a new civilisation. The mighty traditions of Rome left their impress deeply marked on this civilisation, but the various efforts to revive the



civilisation of Rome itself have always been vain. The Renaissance endeavoured in vain to revive its arts, and the Revolution to bring back its institutions.

The Barbarians who successively invaded the Empire from the first century onwards, and who in the end absorbed it, never proposed to destroy but, on the contrary, to continue its civilisation. Had they never waged war on Rome, had they confined themselves to mixing with the Romans in ever increasing numbers, the course of history would not have been changed ; they would not have destroyed the Empire, but their mere mingling with the Roman people would have sufficed to destroy its soul. It may be said, then, that the Roman civilisation has never been overthrown, but has simply been continued, transforming itself in the course of ages by the mere fact of its having fallen into the hands of different races.

A glance at the history of the barbarian invasions is amply sufficient to justify what precedes.

The labours of modern scholars, and particularly those of Fustel de Coulanges, have clearly shown that it was the pacific and not the aggressive invasions of the Barbarians—the aggressive invasions were easily repulsed by Barbarians in the pay of the



empire—that brought about the progressive disappearance of the might of Rome. As early as the times of the first emperors the custom had been introduced of employing Barbarians in the army. It gained ground in proportion as the Romans became richer and more refractory to military service, till, after the lapse of several centuries, there were none but foreigners in the army as in the administration: “The Visigoths, the Burgundians, the Franks were federate soldiers in the service of the Roman Empire.”

When Rome came to have none but Barbarians in its service, and when its provinces were governed by barbarian chiefs, it was evident that these chiefs would render themselves progressively more and more independent. They were, indeed, successful in this effort, but such was the prestige of Rome, that it never occurred to any of them to overthrow the empire, even when Rome fell into their power. When one of these chiefs, Odoacre, king of the Heruti, in the pay of the empire, possessed himself of Rome in 476, he hastened to ask the emperor, whose residence at this time was Constantinople, for his authorisation to govern Italy with the title of Patrician. None of the other chiefs behaved differently. It was always in the name of Rome that they

governed their provinces. It never occurred to them to dispose of the soil or to tamper with the institutions. Clovis regarded himself as a Roman functionary, and was very proud when he obtained the title of consul from the emperor. Thirty years after his death, his successors still accepted the laws promulgated by the emperors, and considered themselves bound to see that they were observed. The beginning of the seventh century must be reached before the barbarian chiefs of Gaul are found to venture on issuing money bearing their own effigy. Until then their coins had always borne the effigy of the emperors. It is only from this period onwards that it can be said that the Gallic population ceased to regard the emperor as their chief. In fact, the historians make the history of France begin two hundred years too soon and accord us some ten kings too many.

Nothing less resembles a conquest than the barbarian invasions, since the populations retained their lands, their language, and their laws, which is never the case in connection with true conquests, such as that, for example, of England by the Normans.

It is probable that the disappearance of the authority of Rome was so gradual, that it took place unperceived by the people of the period. The

provinces had been accustomed for centuries to be governed by chiefs acting in the name of the emperors. Very gradually and very slowly their chiefs came to govern on their own account. Nothing in consequence was changed. The same *régime* continued under new masters throughout the Merovingian period.<sup>1</sup>

The only real change, and it ended by becoming a very profound change, was the formation of a new historic race, involving as a necessary consequence—according to the laws we have set forth—the birth of a new civilisation.

In virtue of that eternal repetition of the same phenomena, which seems the most fixed of the laws of history, we are probably destined to witness in contemporary history pacific invasions analogous to those which brought about the transformation of Roman civilisation. In view of the general extension of modern civilisation, it may seem that nowadays there are no longer any barbarians, or at any rate that these barbarians, relegated to the depths of Asia and Africa, are too far from us to be very

<sup>1</sup> "The Merovingian government," declares M. Fustel de Coulanges, "was in the main a continuation of that which the Roman Empire had given Gaul. . . . There was nothing feudal about the government of the Merovingians."



its absorption was easy and useful. It has brought about the astonishing greatness of America. The United States are now exposed to a gigantic invasion of inferior elements which they neither wish nor are able to assimilate. Between 1880 and 1890 they received nearly six millions of emigrants, almost exclusively composed of workmen of a low class and of every nationality. To-day of the 1,100,000 inhabitants of Chicago not a quarter are Americans. The population includes 400,000 Germans, 220,000 Irish, 50,000 Poles, 55,000 Czechs, etc. There is no fusion between these immigrants and the Americans. They do not even take the trouble to learn the language of their new country, in which they form mere colonies engaged in badly paid occupations. They are discontented and in consequence dangerous. During the recent railway strike Chicago narrowly escaped being burned down by them, and it was necessary to fire on them pitilessly. It is solely among their ranks that are recruited the adepts of that barbarous and levelling socialism, which is perhaps realisable in decadent Europe, but is quite antipathetic to the character of true Americans. The conflicts which socialism is about to engender on the soil of the great Republic will be, in reality, conflicts



working classes, taken in connection with the needs of agriculture and industry. The advantages these immigrants find on our soil are evident. They are freed from the obligation of military service, being foreign nomads they have few or no taxes to pay, and the work is easier and better paid than in their native territory. Further, they invade our country, not merely because of its riches, but because the majority of other countries are always passing laws forbidding their entrance.

This invasion of foreigners is the more redoubtable, in that it is naturally the most inferior elements, those that cannot succeed in making a livelihood in their own country, that emigrate. Our humanitarian principles condemn us to undergo an ever increasing foreign invasion. Forty years ago there were only 400,000 such foreign immigrants; to-day they number over 1,200,000, and they are always flocking in in increasing hordes. Considered merely in respect to the number of Italians it contains, Marseilles might be called an Italian colony. Italy does not possess a single colony that contains a like number of Italians. If the present conditions do not change, if, that is to say, these invasions do not stop, but a very short time will have to elapse before a third of the popula-

tion of France has become German and a third Italian. What can become of the unity, or even of the existence of a people under such conditions? The worst disasters on the battlefield would be infinitely less grave than such invasions.<sup>1</sup> It was a very sure instinct that taught the ancient peoples to dread foreigners; they were well aware that the situation of a country is judged not by the number of its inhabitants, but by that of its citizens.

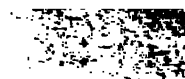
Once more we find that at the bottom of all historical and social questions lies the inevitable racial problem. It dominates all the others.

<sup>1</sup> These invasions being the consequence of certain economical phenomena it is impossible to control, they cannot be prevented. Still, certain measures might be taken which would at least check them: obligatory military service in the Foreign Legion for all foreigners less than twenty-five years of age and counting two years' residence; military tax on the older immigrants; almost entire suppression of naturalisation; tax amounting to a quarter of the income or salary on all foreigners established in France for less than fifty years. The Deputy who should cause such a law to be voted would be worthy of a statue erected by his grateful country.



## **BOOK IV**

*HOW THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS  
OF RACES ARE MODIFIED*





## BOOK IV

### *HOW THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF RACES ARE MODIFIED*

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#### CHAPTER I

##### THE RÔLE OF IDEAS IN THE LIFE OF PEOPLES

The leading ideas of each civilisation are always very few in number—Extreme slowness of their birth and disappearance—Ideas do not influence conduct until they have been transformed into sentiments—They then form part of the character—It is thanks to the slowness of the evolution of ideas that civilisations possess a certain fixity—How ideas take root—The reason has no influence whatever—The influence of affirmation and prestige—The rôle of enthusiasts and apostles—Deformation undergone by ideas as they penetrate the masses—A universally admitted idea soon influences all the elements of civilisation—It is thanks to their community of ideas that the men of each age have a sum total of average conceptions which makes them very much alike in their thoughts and actions—The yoke of custom and opinion—It is not relaxed until the critical ages of history when the old ideas are losing their influence and have not as yet been replaced—This critical age is the only age in which the discussion of opinions can be tolerated—Dogmas only hold their own on the condition that they are not discussed—Peoples cannot change their ideas and dogmas without being at once obliged to change their civilisation.

AFTER having shown that the psychological characteristics of races possess great fixity, and that the history of peoples is the consequence of

these characteristics, we added that it was possible for the psychological elements, as it is for the anatomical elements of species, to be transformed in the long run by slow hereditary accumulations. The evolution of civilisations depends in a large measure on these transformations.

Various factors are capable of provoking psychological changes. Wants, the struggle for life, the action of certain surroundings, the progress of the sciences and of industry, education, beliefs, and many other factors exert an influence. We have already devoted a volume<sup>1</sup> to the study of each of them. It is impossible to treat the matter in detail here. We merely return to it with a view to showing, by the choice of a few essential factors, the mechanism of their action. It is to this study that will be devoted the present and following chapters.

The study of the various civilisations that have succeeded one another since the origin of the world proves that they have always been guided in their development by a very small number of fundamental ideas. If the history of peoples were confined to that of their ideas it would never be very long. When a civilisation has succeeded in creating in a century

<sup>1</sup> *L'homme et les sociétés. Leurs origines et leur histoire*, vol. ii.

one or two fundamental ideas in the domain of the arts, the sciences, literature or philosophy, it may be considered that it has been exceptionally brilliant.

Ideas can have no real action on the soul of peoples until, as the consequence of a very slow elaboration, they have descended from the mobile regions of thought to that stable and unconscious region of the sentiments in which the motives of our actions are elaborated. They then become elements of character and may influence conduct. Character is formed in part of a stratification of unconscious ideas.

When ideas have undergone this slow elaboration their power is considerable, because reason ceases to have any hold on them. The enthusiast who is dominated by an idea, religious or other, is inaccessible to reasoning, however intelligent he may be. All he will be able to attempt, and most often he will not make the effort, will be to try, by artifices of thought and deformations often very great, to bring any idea that seems to contradict the conceptions which dominate him, into some sort of agreement with them.

If ideas can only exert an action after having slowly descended from the regions of the conscious to those



of the unconscious, it is understandable that they will be very slowly transformed, and that the leading ideas of a civilisation should be very few in number, and require so long a period for their evolution. We ought to congratulate ourselves that such is the case; were it not so it would be impossible that civilisations should have any fixity. It is equally fortunate that new ideas can implant themselves in the long run, for if the old ideas were absolutely unchangeable, civilisations would be unable to realise any progress. Thanks to the slowness of our mental transformations many generations of men are needed to secure the triumph of new ideas, and many other generations to bring about their disappearance. The most civilised peoples are those whose leading ideas have been able to maintain an equal distance between variability and fixity. History is strewn with the débris of the peoples who have been unable to maintain this equilibrium.

It is easy, in consequence, to understand how it is that what is most striking when the history of the various peoples is studied, is not the wealth and novelty of their ideas, but, on the contrary, the extreme poverty of these ideas, the slowness of their transformations, and the power they exert. Civilisations are the



result of some few fundamental ideas, and when these ideas change, the civilisations are at once compelled to change as well. The Middle Ages existed on two principal ideas: the religious idea and the feudal idea. Its arts, its literature, and its entire conception of life are derived from these ideas. At the time of the Renaissance these ideas undergo some modification; the rediscovered ideal of the old Greco-Latin world implants itself in Europe, and at once the conception of life, the arts and literature begin to be transformed. Then the authority of tradition is shaken, scientific truths substitute themselves gradually for revealed truth, and civilisation is once again transformed. At the present day the old religious ideas seem definitely to have lost the greater part of their empire, and owing to this fact all the social institutions that were based on them are threatened with destruction.

The history of the genesis of ideas, of their domination, of their transformations, and of their disappearance, can only be written on the principle of citing numerous examples in illustration. Could we enter into details, we would show that each element of civilisation—philosophy, beliefs, arts, literature, etc.—is subject to a very small number of leading ideas

whose evolution is exceedingly slow. The sciences themselves do not escape this law. The whole of modern physics is derived from the idea of the indestructibility of force, the whole of biology from the idea of evolution, the whole of medicine from the idea of the action of the infinitely small, and the history of these ideas shows that, although the persons called upon to appreciate them belong to the most enlightened classes, they only establish themselves little by little and with difficulty. In a century in which everything proceeds with such rapidity, and in a field of investigation in which passions and interests have little play, the implanting of a fundamental scientific idea requires not less than twenty-five years. The clearest ideas, those most easily demonstrable, those which should have aroused the least controversy, were just as long in finding acceptance.

Whatever the nature of the idea, whether it be a scientific, artistic, philosophic, or religious idea, the mechanism of its propagation is always identical. It has to be adopted at first by a small number of apostles, the intensity of whose faith and the authority of whose names give great prestige. They then act much more by suggestion than by demon-

stration. The essential elements of the mechanism of persuasion must not be sought for in the value of a demonstration. Ideas can be enforced either by the prestige of the promulgator or by an appeal to the passions, but no influence is exerted by appealing solely to the reason. The masses never let themselves be persuaded by demonstrations, but merely by affirmations, and the authority of these affirmations depends solely on the prestige exerted by the person who enunciates them.

When these apostles have succeeded in convincing a small circle of adepts and have thus formed new apostles, the new idea begins to enter the domain of discussion. It arouses at first universal opposition, because it necessarily clashes with much that is old and established. The apostles who defend it are naturally excited by this opposition, which merely convinces them of their superiority over the rest of mankind, and they defend the new idea energetically, not because it is true—most often they know nothing about its truth or falsehood—but simply because they have adopted it. The new idea is now more and more discussed; that is to say, in reality it is entirely accepted by the one side, and entirely rejected by the other side. Affirmations and negations but very few arguments,



are exchanged, the sole motives for the acceptance or rejection of an idea being inevitably, for the immense majority of brains, mere sentimental motives, in which reasoning cannot have any part.

Thanks to these always impassioned debates, the idea progresses slowly. The new generations who find it controverted tend to adopt it merely because it is controverted. For young persons, always eager to be independent, wholesale opposition to received ideas is the most accessible form of originality.

The idea continues then to gain ground, and before long it has no longer any need of support. It will now spread everywhere by the mere effect of imitation, acting as a contagion, a faculty with which men are generally endowed in as high a degree as are the big anthropoid apes, which modern science assigns to men as their forefathers.

As soon as the mechanism of contagion intervenes, the idea enters on the phase which necessarily means success. It is soon accepted by opinion. It then acquires a penetrating and subtle force which spreads it progressively among all intellects, creating simultaneously a sort of special atmosphere, a general manner of thinking. Like the fine dust of the high-



way which penetrates everywhere, it finds its way into all the conceptions and all the productions of an epoch. The idea and its consequences then form part of that compact stock of hereditary commonplaces imposed on us by education. The idea has triumphed and has entered the domain of sentiment where for long it will have nothing to fear.

Of the various ideas which guide a civilisation, some, those relating to the arts or philosophy for example, rest confined to the upper grades of the nation ; others, particularly those relating to religious conceptions and politics, go deep down in some instances among the crowd. They arrive there in general much deformed, but when they arrive there the power they exert over primitive minds incapable of reasoning is immense. The idea under these conditions represents something that is invincible, and its efforts are propagated with the violence of a torrent that has overflowed its banks. It is always easy to find among a people a hundred thousand men ready to risk their lives to defend an idea as soon as this idea has subjugated them. Then it is that supervene those great events which revolutionise history, and which only crowds are capable of accomplishing. It is not men of letters, artists, or philo-

sophers who established the religions which have ruled the world, or the vast empires which have stretched from one hemisphere to another, or who have been the causes of the great religious and political revolutions which have changed the face of Europe. These achievements have been the work of the illiterate sufficiently dominated by an idea to sacrifice their lives to its propagation. With nothing else to rely on but this theoretically very insignificant though practically very effective outfit, the nomads of the deserts of Arabia conquered a portion of the old Greco-Roman world and founded one of the most gigantic empires known to history. It was with a similar moral outfit—the domination of an idea—that the heroic soldiers of the Convention were victorious against the onslaughts of Europe up in arms.

✓ A strong conviction is so irresistible that only a conviction of equal strength has any chance of resisting it victoriously. Faith is the only serious enemy faith has to fear. It is sure to triumph where the material force opposed to it is in the service of weak sentiments and enfeebled beliefs. If, however, it finds itself confronted by a faith of equal intensity, the struggle becomes very severe, and success under

these conditions is determined by accessory circumstances, most often of a moral order, by the spirit of discipline or the better organisation. A close study of the history of the Arabs, just referred to, shows that on the occasion of their earlier conquests—and these conquests are always the most difficult and the most important—they encountered adversaries who were morally weak, although their military organisation was fairly good. Syria was the first country they invaded. All they met there was Byzantine armies composed of mercenaries, but little disposed to sacrifice themselves for any cause whatever. Animated by an intense faith which increased their strength tenfold, they dispersed these troops who lacked an ideal as easily as before their time a handful of Greeks, sustained by love of their city, had dispersed the innumerable soldiers of Xerxes. The upshot of their enterprise would have been quite different if they had come into collision a few centuries earlier with the Roman cohorts. It is evident that when equally powerful moral forces are pitted against one another, victory rests with the side that is best organised. The faith of the Vendéans was assuredly most ardent, they were most energetically convinced ; but the convictions of the soldiers



of the Convention were also very strong, and as their military organisation was the better, they gained the day.

In religion, as in politics, success always goes to those who believe, never to those who are sceptical, and if at the present day it would seem as if the future belongs to the Socialists, in spite of the dangerous absurdity of their dogmas, the reason is that they are now the only party possessing real convictions. The modern governing classes have lost faith in everything. They no longer believe in anything, not even in the possibility of defending themselves against the threatening flood of barbarians, by which they are surrounded on all sides.

When an idea, after a longer or shorter period of tentative existence, modifications, deformations, discussion and propaganda, has acquired its definite form and penetrated the soul of the masses, it constitutes a dogma, that is one of those absolute truths which are no longer discussed. It then forms part of those general beliefs on which the existence of peoples is based. Its universal character allows it to play a preponderating rôle. The great epochs of history, the century of Augustus or that of Louis XIV., have been those in which ideas, leaving their tentative



period and getting beyond discussion, have taken fixed shape and become the sovereign masters of the thought of men. They then become brilliant beacons, and everything they illumine assumes a similar hue.

As soon as a new idea has triumphed, it leaves its mark on all the elements of civilisation, including the least important; but in order that it shall produce its full effect it is necessary that it should have penetrated the soul of the masses. From the intellectual heights on which it came into being, it descends from grade to grade, undergoing on the way incessant alterations and modifications until it has taken a shape in which it is accessible to the popular soul that is to secure its triumph. At this point it is met with concentrated in a very few words, sometimes in a single word, but this word evokes powerful images, either seductive or terrible, but always on this account impressive. Examples are the words Paradise and Hell in the Middle Ages, brief syllables which have the magic power of corresponding with everything, and for simple souls of explaining everything. The word Socialism represents for the modern working man one of those magical and synthetic formulæ capable of exerting an empire over souls. It evokes images which vary with the masses which it

penetrates, but which are powerful in spite of their rudimentary forms.

For the French theoretician the word Socialism evokes the image of a sort of Paradise, in which men, become equal, will enjoy ideal felicity under the incessant direction of the State. For the German working man the image evoked presents itself under the guise of a smoky tavern in which the Government will serve gratuitously to every comer gigantic pyramids of sausages and sauerkraut and unlimited pots of beer. None among those who dream either of sauerkraut or of equality have ever of course been at pains to find out the sum total of what there is to be divided or the number of those who are there to share it. The essential characteristic of an idea of this kind is that it assumes an absolute shape that raises it above all objection.

When the idea has come to transform itself little by little into a sentiment, and has become a dogma, its triumph is assured for a long time, and all attempts to shake it by reasoning will be vain. Doubtless in the end the new idea will undergo the fate of the idea whose place it has taken. It will grow old and decline; but before it is completely used up it will have to undergo an entire series of retrograde trans-

formations, of deformations of every kind, which will demand several generations for their accomplishment. Before dying out entirely, it will for long form part of those old hereditary ideas which we style prejudices, but which we nevertheless respect. An old idea, even though it has become a mere word, a sound, a mirage, possesses a magical power by which we are still subjugated.

In this way is kept up that old inheritance of antiquated ideas, opinions, and conventions which we accept without demur, though they would offer but little resistance to an effort of the reason, if we would consent for an instant to discuss them. But how many men are capable of discussing their own opinions, and how many of these opinions would hold water after the most superficial examination?

It is better that the redoubtable examination should not be attempted. Happily there is little risk of our undertaking it. The critical spirit constituting a higher faculty that is very rare, whereas the spirit of imitation is a faculty very commonly possessed, the immense majority of minds accept without discussion the ready-made ideas furnished them by opinion and transmitted them by education.

It thus happens that by means of heredity, educa-



tion, surroundings, contagion and opinion, the men of each age and of each race possess a sum of average conceptions which render them singularly like one another, alike indeed to such a degree that, when the lapse of centuries allows us to consider them from the proper perspective, we recognise by their artistic, philosophical, and literary productions the epoch at which they lived. Doubtless it could not be said that they copied one another absolutely, but as they had in common identical modes of feeling and thinking, they were necessarily led to produce very kindred work.

We must congratulate ourselves that matters are thus arranged, for it is precisely this network of common traditions, ideas, sentiments, beliefs, and modes of thinking that form the soul of a people. We have seen that the vigour of the soul of a people is in proportion to the strength of this network. It is this network in reality, and it alone, that keeps nations alive, and it is impossible that it should break up without the nations crumbling away. It constitutes at once their true force and their true master. Asiatic sovereigns are sometimes represented as kinds of despots whose fantasy is their only guide. These fantasies, on the contrary, have singularly narrow



limits. The network of traditions is more especially powerful in the East. Religious traditions, so enfeebled amongst ourselves, retain all their empire in the East, and the most whimsical despot would never run counter to two sovereigns he knows are infinitely more powerful than he is : tradition and opinion.

The modern civilised man finds himself in one of those rare critical periods of history in which the old ideas, whence his civilisation is derived, having lost their empire, and the new ideas not being formed as yet, discussion is tolerated. He must go back to the periods of the civilisations of antiquity, or merely some two or three centuries back, to get an idea of the nature in those ages of the yoke of custom and opinion, and to learn the risks run by innovators sufficiently bold to attack these two powers. The Greeks, whom ignorant rhetoricians affirm to have been so free, were strictly subjected to the yoke of opinion and custom. Each citizen had a number of absolutely inviolable beliefs ; none would have thought of discussing received ideas, which were accepted without demur. The Grecian world was unacquainted with religious liberty, with the liberty of private life, or with liberties of any kind. The Athenian law did not even allow the citizen to keep

aloof from the assemblies, or not to celebrate religiously a national fête. The alleged liberty of the ancient world was nothing but the unconscious and, in consequence, absolute form of the entire subjection of the citizen to the yoke of the ideas of his city. In the state of general war in which societies then lived, a society whose members should have possessed liberty of thought and action would not have lasted a single day. The age of decadence for gods, institutions, and dogmas has always begun as soon as they have been exposed to discussion.

In modern civilisations, the old ideas which form the basis of custom and opinion having been almost destroyed, their empire over souls has become very weak. They have entered on that worn-out phase in which old ideas are in process of becoming prejudices. As long as they are not replaced by a new idea, anarchy reigns in men's minds. It is only thanks to this anarchy that discussion can be tolerated. Writers, thinkers, and philosopher sought to bless the present age and hasten to take advantage of it, for they will not see its like again. It is perhaps an age of decadence, but it is one of those rare moments in the history of the world during which expression of thought is free. It is impossible that

it should last. Given the present conditions of civilisation, the European peoples are tending towards a social state which will tolerate neither discussion nor liberty. The new dogmas that are about to come into being cannot establish themselves, except on the condition that they accept no discussions of any kind, and that they be as intolerant as the dogmas that have preceded them.

The man of the present day is still searching for the ideas that shall serve as the basis of the future social state, and therein lies the danger he runs. What is important in the history of peoples, and what has a far-reaching influence on their destiny, is neither revolutions nor wars—their ruins are quickly effaced—but the changes in their fundamental ideas. They cannot be accomplished without all the elements of a civilisation undergoing of necessity a simultaneous transformation. The real revolutions, the only revolutions that endanger the existence of a people, are those which affect its thought.

It is not so much the adoption of new ideas that is dangerous for a people, as the trying of various ideas in succession to which it is condemned before it finds the idea on which it will be able to build up sufficiently solidly the new social edifice that is to



replace the old. It is not assuredly because an idea is erroneous that it is dangerous—the religious ideas on which we have existed up to now were most erroneous—but it is because long repeated experiments are necessary to make it certain that the new ideas can be adapted to the needs of the societies that adopt them. The masses unhappily can only appreciate their degree of utility by dint of experience. Without doubt, there is no need to be a great psychologist or a great economist to predict that the application of existing, socialist ideas will lead the peoples who adopt them to a state of abject decadence and shameful despotism; but how are the people it charms to be prevented from accepting the New Gospel that is preached to them?

History contains frequent examples of the cost of essaying ideas that are unacceptable for an epoch, but it is not to history that man goes for lessons. Charlemagne endeavoured in vain to re-establish the Roman Empire, but the idea of unity was not realisable at the time, and his work perished with him, as that of Napoleon was destined to perish at a later period. Philip II. uselessly wasted his genius, and the strength of Spain—the predominant country at the time—in an effort to combat the spirit of free



inquiry which was spreading through Europe under the name of Protestantism. This opposition to the new idea merely resulted in reducing Spain to a state of ruin and decadence from which it has never recovered. In our own time, the chimerical ideas of a crowned visionary, inspired by the incurable international sentimentalism of his race, have brought about the unity of Italy and Germany, and have cost us two provinces, while endangering the peace of Europe for a long time to come. The utterly false idea that numbers constitute the strength of armies has covered Europe with a sort of armed national guard, and is leading up to its inevitable bankruptcy. The socialist ideas with regard to labour, capital, the transformation of private property into State property, etc., will prove the destruction of the peoples that permanent armies and bankruptcy shall have spared.

The principle of nationalities, formerly so dear to statesmen that they based their entire policy on it, may further be cited among the leading ideas, whose dangerous influence has had to be undergone. Its realisation has involved Europe in the most disastrous war, has armed it from one end to the other, and will land all modern states in succession in ruin and anarchy. The only apparent motive that could be

invoked in defence of this principle was that the largest and most populous countries are the strongest, and run the fewest risks. It was secretly reflected that they were the best fitted to embark on conquest. It is found, however, to-day, that it is precisely the smallest and least populous countries—Portugal, Greece, Switzerland, Belgium, Sweden, the petty Balkan principalities—that have the least to fear from their neighbours. The idea of unity has so completely ruined Italy, formerly so prosperous, that it is on the eve of a revolution and of bankruptcy. The annual budgetary expenditure of all the Italian States, which before the realisation of Italian unity amounted to 550 millions now reaches two milliards.

It is not given, however, to men to stop the march of ideas when they have penetrated the soul of the masses. When they have done this, their evolution must be accomplished, and it often happens that they are defended by those who will be their first victims. It is not sheep merely that docilely follow their guide to the slaughter-house. We must bow before the strength of an idea. When it has attained to a certain period of its evolution, there are no longer either arguments or demonstrations that can avail against it. For peoples to be able to free themselves



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from the yoke of an idea, either centuries or violent revolutions are necessary; sometimes the two. Innumerable are the chimeras humanity has forged for itself and of which in succession it has been the victim.

## CHAPTER II

### THE RÔLE OF RELIGIOUS BELIEFS IN THE EVOLUTION OF CIVILISATIONS

Preponderating influence of religious ideas—They have always constituted the most important element of the life of peoples—Religious ideas responsible for the majority of historical events and social and political institutions—A new civilisation always comes into existence with a new religious idea—Power of the religious ideal—Its influence on character—It directs all the faculties towards the same end—The political, artistic, and literary history of peoples is the offspring of their beliefs—The slightest change in the state of a people's belief results in an entire series of transformations in its existence—Various examples.

**A**MONG the various ideas by which the peoples have been guided, the ideas which are the beacons of history, the poles of civilisation, religious ideas have played too preponderating and too fundamental a part for us not to devote a special chapter to them.

Religious beliefs have always constituted the most important element of the life of peoples, and in consequence of their history. The most considerable



historical events, those which have had the most colossal influence, have been the birth and death of gods. With a new religious idea a new civilisation is born into the world. At all the ages of humanity, in ancient times as in modern times, the fundamental questions have always been religious questions. If humanity could allow all its gods to die, it might be said of such an event that, as regards its consequences, it would be the most important event that had taken place on the surface of our planet since the birth of the first civilisations.

For it must not be forgotten that, since the dawn of historical times, all political and social institutions have been founded on religious beliefs, and that the gods have always played the first rôle on the world's stage. Apart from love, which itself is a powerful but personal and transitory religion, it is only religious beliefs that are capable of influencing character in a rapid manner. The conquests of the Arabs, the Crusades, Spain under the Inquisition, England during the Puritan period, France with its St. Bartholomew, and the wars of the revolution show what becomes of a people rendered fanatic by its chimeras. These chimeras exercise a sort of permanent hypnotic effect which is so intense that it

profoundly transforms the entire mental constitution. Doubtless it is man who created the gods, but after having created them he promptly became their slave. They are not the offspring of fear, as Lucretius affirms, but of hope, and for this reason their influence will be eternal.

The gift of the gods to man, and it is a gift which they alone have been able to endow him with up to now, is a state of mind which allows of happiness. No philosophy has ever been able as yet to realise such an achievement.

The consequence, if not the aim, of all civilisations, of all philosophies, of all religions is to engender certain states of mind. But of these states of mind some imply happiness, while the others do not. Happiness depends very little on exterior circumstances, and to a very great extent on our disposition of spirit. The martyrs at the stake were probably much happier than their executioners. The street-sweeper who, devoid of care, eats his crust of bread rubbed with garlic may be infinitely happier than the millionaire who is a prey to manifold anxieties.

The evolution of civilisation has unhappily created for the modern man a multitude of wants, without giving him the means of satisfying them, and in this

way has promoted general discontent. Civilisation is doubtless the mother of progress, but it is the mother as well of Socialism and Anarchism, those redoubtable expressions of the despair of the masses that are no longer sustained by any belief. Compare the restless, feverish European, discontented with his lot, with the Oriental, always satisfied with his destiny. In what do they differ, if not as regards the state of their soul? A people has been transformed when its mode of conceiving and, in consequence, of thinking and acting has been transformed.

Under penalty of being unable to last for long, the primary duty of a society is to endeavour to find the means of creating a state of mind which shall render man happy. All the societies founded up to the present have had as their basis an ideal capable of subjugating men's souls, and they have always disappeared as soon as this ideal has ceased to subjugate them.

One of the great errors of modern times is the belief that it is only in exterior things that the human soul can find happiness. Happiness is within us, created by ourselves, and scarcely ever outside ourselves. After having destroyed the ideals of past ages, we are now finding that it is not possible to



live without them, and that the secret of replacing them must be discovered, if we would continue to exist.

The true benefactors of humanity, those who merit colossal statues in gold raised in their honour by grateful peoples, are those powerful magicians, the creators of ideals, whom humanity sometimes produces, but whom it produces so rarely. Above the torrent of vain appearances, standing forth the only realities man can ever know, above the inexorable, the glacial mechanism of the world, they have evoked powerful and pacifying chimeras, which hide from man the sombre sides of his destiny, and create for him enchanted refuges of dreams and hope.

From the exclusively political standpoint, too, it is found that the influence of religious beliefs is immense. What makes their irresistible force is that they constitute the only factor which can momentarily procure a people absolute community of interests, sentiments, and thoughts. In this way the religious spirit replaces at one stroke the slow hereditary accumulation necessary to form the soul of a nation. The people that is subjugated by a belief does not doubtless change its mental constitution, but all its faculties are directed towards the same end—the



triumph of its belief—and solely in virtue of this fact its strength becomes formidable. It is at epochs of ardent faith that peoples, momentarily transformed, accomplish those prodigious efforts, found those empires which are the astonishment of history. It was thus that a few Arab tribes, unified by the thought of Mahomet, conquered in a few years nations who ignored their very names, and founded their immense empire.

It is not the quality of the beliefs that must be taken into consideration, but the sway they exert over men's souls. Whether the god invoked be Moloch, or some other yet more barbarous divinity, is of no importance. It is even well for the prestige of the divinity that it should be wholly intolerant and barbarous. Gods too tolerant or too mild lend their worshippers no strength. The sectaries of the stern Mahomet ruled for long over a great portion of the world, and are still redoubtable ; those of pacific Buddha have never founded anything durable, and are already forgotten by history.

The religious spirit then has played a political rôle of capital importance in the existence of peoples, because it was always the only factor capable of influencing their character in a short space of time.

The gods, no doubt, are not immortal, but the religious spirit is eternal. It may slumber for a while, but it awakes as soon as a new divinity is created. A century ago it enabled France to resist victoriously the onslaughts of all Europe up in arms. Once more the world has had the spectacle of what may be accomplished by the religious spirit, for it was indeed a new religion that was founded at the period in question, and that inspired an entire people. The divinities that blossomed forth were, doubtless, too fragile to last, but so long as they lasted they exerted absolute sway.

The power of transforming souls possessed by religions is, however, somewhat ephemeral. It is rare for beliefs to retain for any length of time that degree of intensity which entirely transforms character. The dream ends by growing more shadowy, the hypnotised people awakes in a measure, and the old substratum of character again comes to the front.

Even in cases where the beliefs are all powerful the national character is always recognisable in the manner in which these beliefs are adopted and in the manifestations they provoke. What differences there are between the same belief as found in England, Spain, or France. Would the Reformation ever have

been possible in Spain, or would England ever have consented to submit to the terrible yoke of the Inquisition? Among the peoples who have adopted the reformed faith is it not easy to perceive the fundamental characteristics of races which, in spite of the hypnotising action of their beliefs, have preserved the special features of their mental constitution: independence, energy, the habit of reasoning, and of not obeying servilely the law of a master?

The political, artistic, and literary history of peoples is the offspring of their beliefs; but these latter, while they modify the character, are also profoundly modified by it. The character of a people and its beliefs are the keys of its destiny. The former, as regards its fundamental elements, is invariable, and it is precisely because it does not vary that the history of a people always retains a certain unity. The beliefs, on the other hand, may vary, and it is because they vary that history records so many upheavals.

The slightest change in the state of a people's beliefs necessarily results in an entire series of transformations in its existence. We remarked in a previous chapter that in France the men of the eighteenth century seemed very different from those of the seventeenth century. Doubtless, but what was the



origin of this difference? Solely the fact that in the lapse of a century theology had given way to science, reason had taken the place of tradition, and observed truth that of revealed truth. By this simple change of conceptions the aspect of a century is transformed, and were we to follow its effects we should find that our great Revolution, together with the events that have since occurred and are still in progress, are the mere consequence of an evolution of religious ideas.

Moreover, if at the present day our old society totters on its foundations and finds all its institutions profoundly shaken, the reason is that it is losing more and more the beliefs on which it had existed up till now. When it shall have lost them entirely, a new civilisation, founded on a new faith, will necessarily take its place. History shows us that peoples do not long survive the disappearance of their gods. The civilisations that are born with them also die with them. There is nothing so destructive as the dust of dead gods.



### CHAPTER III

#### THE RÔLE OF GREAT MEN IN THE HISTORY OF PEOPLES

The great advances made by each civilisation have always been realised by a small *élite* of superior minds—Nature of their rôle—They synthesise all the efforts of a race—Examples supplied by great discoveries—Political rôle of great men—They embody the dominant ideal of their race—Influence of the great hallucinated—Inventors of genius transform a civilisation—The fanatics and the hallucinated make history.

WHEN studying the hierarchy and the differentiation of races, we saw that what most differentiates Europeans from Orientals is that only the former possess an *élite* of superior men. Let us now endeavour to trace in a few lines the limits of the rôle of this *élite*.

The small phalanx of eminent men possessed by a civilised people—a phalanx it would suffice to suppress in each generation to lower considerably the intellectual level of that people—constitutes the true incarna-

tion of the forces of a race. To it is due the progress realised in the sciences, the arts, in industry, in a word, in all the branches of civilisation.

History shows that it is to this circumscribed *elite* that we owe all the advances made. Although they profit by these advances, the masses do not like being surpassed, and the greatest thinkers and inventors have often been their martyrs. And yet all the generations, all the past of a race, blossom forth in these splendid geniuses which are the marvellous flowers of a race. They are the true glory of a nation, each member of which, down to the most humble, is entitled to be proud of them. They do not appear by chance or by a miracle, but represent the crowning point of a long past. They synthesise the greatness of their time and of their race. To favour their production and development is to favour the achievement of those advances of which humanity will reap the benefit. If we allow ourselves to be too much blinded by our dreams of universal equality we shall be the first victims of our attitude. Equality carries inferiority in its wake ; it is the dull, oppressive dream of vulgar mediocrities. It has only been realised in barbarous epochs. For equality to reign in the world, it would be necessary to bring down,

little by little, whatever makes the value of a race to the level of what is least elevated in the race.

But while the rôle of superior men in the development of a civilisation is considerable, it is not, however, quite what it is generally said to be. Their action consists, I repeat, in synthesising all the efforts of a race ; their discoveries are always the result of a long series of anterior discoveries ; they build an edifice with the stones which others have slowly hewn. Historians, who in general are very simple-minded, have always thought it right to connect the name of a man with each invention ; and yet, of the great inventions which have transformed the world, such as printing, gunpowder, steam, or the electric telegraph, there is not one of which it can be said that it was created by a single brain. When the genesis of discoveries of this kind are studied, it is always found that they are the outcome of a long series of preparatory efforts: the final invention is only the crowning stroke. Galileo's observation of the isochronism of the oscillations of a suspended lamp paved the way for the invention of chronometers, which were to enable sailors to trace their route across the ocean with certainty. Gunpowder resulted from slow transformations of Grecian fire. The steam engine repre-

sents the sum of a series of inventions, each of which demanded immense labour. A Greek, had he had a hundred times as much genius as Archimedes, would have been unable to discover the locomotive engine. Could he have discovered it, moreover, the discovery would have been of no use to him, as, to fabricate his engine, he would have had to wait until mechanics had realised advances which it took two thousand years of efforts to achieve.

The political rôle of great statesmen, while it is apparently more independent of the past, is, nevertheless, scarcely less dependent thereon than is the rôle of great inventors. Blinded by the dazzling brilliancy of the powerful leaders of men who have transformed the political existence of peoples, such writers as Hegel, Cousin, Carlyle, &c., have wished to make of them demi-gods, whose unaided genius has modified the destiny of peoples. Beyond doubt they can affect the evolution of a society, but it is not given to them to change its course. The genius of a Cromwell or a Napoleon is powerless to achieve such a task. Great conquerors can destroy towns, men, and empires by fire and sword as a child can set fire to a museum filled with art treasures ; but this destructive power must not deceive us as to the nature



of their rôle. The influence of great politicians is only durable when, as in the case of Cæsar or Richelieu, they contrive to give their efforts a direction in harmony with the needs of the moment; the true cause of their success is generally much anterior to themselves. Had he made the attempt two or three centuries earlier, Cæsar would not have made the great Roman Republic accept the law of a master, and under the same conditions Richelieu would have been unable to realise the unity of France. In politics the really great men are those who have a presentiment of the needs that are about to arise, of the events for which the past has paved the way, and who show their fellows the direction that has got to be taken. This direction, perhaps, was clear to nobody, but the fatalities of evolution were soon to engage therein the peoples whose destinies were momentarily in the hands of these powerful geniuses. They, too, like the great inventors, synthesise the results of a long anterior evolution.

These analogies between the different categories of great men must not be carried too far. The inventors play an important part in the future evolution of a civilisation, but no immediate rôle in the political history of peoples. The superior men to whom are due

the important discoveries, from the plough to the telegraph, which are the common patrimony of humanity, have never possessed the qualities of character requisite for the founding of a religion or the conquest of an empire, necessary, that is, to change visibly the face of history. The thinker is too alive to the complexity of problems ever to have very strong convictions, and too few political ends seem to him worthy of his efforts for him to attempt to realise any one of them. Inventors may modify a civilisation in the long run ; it is only fanatics, men of narrow intelligence, but energetic character and powerful passions, who are capable of founding religions and empires. At the bidding of a Peter the Hermit millions of men hurled themselves against the East ; the words of an hallucinated enthusiast such as Mahomet created a force capable of triumphing over the old Greco-Roman world ; an obscure monk like Luther bathed Europe in blood. The voice of a Galileo or a Newton will never have the least echo among the masses. The inventors of genius hasten the march of civilisation. The fanatics and the hallucinated create history.

For of what is history, as written in books, composed, if not of the long narrative of man's

struggles to create an ideal, to worship it, and then to destroy it? And, in the eyes of science, have such ideals more value than the vain mirages created by the action of light on the moving sands of the desert?

Still it is the hallucinated, the creators or propagators of these mirages, who have effected the most far-reaching transformations in the world. From the depth of their tombs they still inflict the yoke of their thoughts on the soul of races, and influence the character and destiny of peoples. The importance of their rôle must not be overlooked ; but, at the same time, it must not be forgotten that the task they accomplished was successfully accomplished because they unconsciously embodied and expressed the ideal of their race and their epoch. A people is only led by those who embody its dreams. Moses represented for the Jews the desire for deliverance over which they had brooded during the years that they were slaves lacerated by the whips of the Egyptians. Buddha and Jesus were alive to the infinite miseries of their time, and gave a religious shape to the need for charity and pity, which, at these periods of universal suffering, were coming into existence in the world. Mahomet realised by means of unity of belief



the political unity of a people divided into thousands of rival tribes. That soldier of genius, Napoleon, embodied the ideal of military glory, of vanity, and of revolutionary propaganda, which at the time were the characteristics of the people he led all over Europe during fifteen years in pursuit of wild adventures.

At bottom, then, it is ideas, and in consequence those who embody and propagate them that rule the world. Their triumph is assured when they are defended by the hallucinated and by enthusiasts. It is of slight importance whether they be true or false. History ever teaches us that it is the most chimerical ideas that have had the most fanatical following and played the most important rôle. It is in the name of the most illusory chimeras that the world has been hitherto thrown into confusion, that civilisations which seemed imperishable have been destroyed, and that others have been founded. It is not, as the Gospel assures us, the kingdom of heaven, but of the earth, that belongs to the poor in spirit, only provided they possess the faith that moves mountains. Philosophers, who often have to devote centuries to destroying what enthusiasts have created in a day, ought to bow before those who are



capable of such feats. The enthusiasts form part of the mysterious forces that shape the world. They have determined the most important of the events of which history records the course.

Doubtless they have only propagated illusions, but it is on these illusions, at once redoubtable, seductive, and vain, that humanity has hitherto existed, and doubtless will continue to exist. These illusions are mere shadows, but they must nevertheless be respected. Thanks to them our forefathers knew what hope was, and in their heroic and wild pursuit of these shadows they raised us from our primitive state of barbarism to the point we have reached to-day. Of all the factors in the development of civilisations, illusions are perhaps the most powerful. It was an illusion that built up the pyramids, and covered Egypt for five thousand years with colossal stone monuments. It was an illusion that, in the Middle Ages, raised our gigantic cathedrals, and induced the Western world to dispute the possession of a tomb with the East. It is the pursuit of illusions that has founded the religions which exert their sway over a half of humanity, and founded or destroyed the vastest empires. It is not in the pursuit of truth but in that of error that humanity



has expended the most efforts. It could not attain the chimerical goals it had in view ; but it was in trying to attain them that it realised all the progress it had no thought of achieving.



## **BOOK V**

### ***THE DISSOCIATION OF THE CHARACTER OF RACES AND THEIR DECADENCE***

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explains how it is that a people always requires a very long time to raise itself to a high level of culture, and in some cases a very short time to descend into the abyss of decadence.

When the causes are examined that led to the successive ruin of the various peoples with which history is concerned, whether the people in question be the Persians, the Romans, or any other nation, the fundamental factor in their fall is always found to be a change in their mental constitution resulting from the deterioration of their character. I cannot call to mind a single people that has disappeared in consequence of the deterioration of its intelligence.

For all the civilisations of the past the mechanism of dissolution has been identical, so identical, indeed, that it may be asked with the poet, whether history, which has so many books, has but a single page. When a people reaches that degree of civilisation and power at which it is assured that it is no longer exposed to the attacks of its neighbours, it begins to enjoy the benefits of peace and material well-being procured by wealth. At this juncture the military virtues decline, the excess of civilisation creates new needs, and egoism increases. Having no ideal beyond the hasty enjoyment of rapidly acquired

advantages, the citizens abandon to the State the care of public affairs, and soon lose all the qualities that had made their greatness. Then barbarian, or semi-barbarian neighbours, whose needs are few, but who are strongly attached to an ideal, invade the too civilised people, and proceed to form a new civilisation with the *débris* of that which they have overthrown. It was in this way that, in spite of the formidable organisations of the Romans and Persians, the barbarians destroyed the Empire of the former and the Arabs that of the latter. It was not in the qualities appertaining to the intelligence that the invaded peoples were lacking. From this point of view no comparison was possible between the conquerors and the conquered. It was when Rome already bore within it the germs of its approaching decadence that it counted the greatest number of men of culture, artists, men of letters, and men of learning. Almost all the works that have made its greatness date from this period of its history. But Rome had lost that fundamental element which no development of the intelligence can replace: character.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "The evil from which Roman society was then suffering," writes M. Fustel de Coulanges, "was not the corruption of its morals; it was the weakening of its will power, and, so to speak, the enervation of its character."

The old-time Romans had very few wants and a very strong ideal. This ideal—the greatness of Rome—absolutely dominated their souls, and each citizen was ready to sacrifice to it his family, his fortune, and his life. When Rome had become the pole of the universe, the richest city of the world, it was invaded by foreigners hailing from all countries, and whom it admitted in the end to rights of citizenship. As all they demanded was to be allowed to enjoy the luxury of Rome, they had but little concern for its glory. The great city then became an immense caravansary, but was no longer Rome. It seemed to be still alive, but its soul had long been dead.

Analogous causes of decadence threaten our hyper-refined civilisations, which are menaced, however, as well by other causes due to the evolution produced in men's minds by modern scientific discoveries. Science has renewed our ideas, and deprived our religious and social conceptions of all authority. It has shown man the trifling place he occupies in the universe, and the utter indifference of Nature towards him. He has perceived that what he used to term liberty was merely ignorance of the causes of which he is the slave, and that in view of the inexorable



necessities of which they are the puppets, to be slaves is the natural condition of all living beings. He has learned that nature ignores what we term pity, and that all the progress it has realised has been due to a pitiless process of selection that involves the perpetual crushing of the weak by the strong.

All these harsh and glacial conceptions, so contrary to the teachings of the old beliefs that enchanted our forefathers, have given birth to ominous conflicts in men's souls. In vulgar brains they have engendered that state of anarchy as regards his ideas which seems characteristic of the modern man. In the case of the young generation of artists and men of letters, these same conflicts have resulted in a sort of sullen indifference that is fatal to the will, in an utter incapacity to embrace any cause whatever with enthusiasm, and in an exclusive cult of immediate and personal interests.

Commenting upon a very just reflection of a modern writer to the effect that the "sense of the relative dominates contemporary thought," a Minister of Public Instruction proclaimed with evident satisfaction in a recent speech that "the substitution of relative ideas for abstract notions in every field of



human knowledge is the greatest conquest of science." The conquest declared to be new is in reality very old. It was achieved many centuries ago by the philosophers of India. Let us not be too ready to congratulate ourselves that it is tending at the present day to gain ground. The real danger to modern societies lies precisely in the fact that men have lost confidence in the worth of the principles that serve as their foundations. I greatly doubt whether it would be possible to cite in all history a single civilisation, a single institution, a single belief that has succeeded in holding its own by taking its stand on principles esteemed to have only a relative value. Moreover, if the future seems to belong to those socialist doctrines which reason condemns, it is because they are the only doctrines whose upholders speak in the name of truths they declare to be absolute. The masses will always turn towards those who speak to them of absolute truths, and will slight all others. To be a statesman, it is necessary to be able to penetrate the soul of the multitude, to understand its dreams, and to renounce philosophic abstractions. Things in themselves change but little. It is only the ideas that are formed of them that change greatly. It is on these ideas that it is needful to know how to act.

Doubtless our knowledge of the real world is limited to appearances, to mere states of conscience of which the value is evidently relative. But when we adopt the social standpoint, we can say that for a given age and a given society there are conditions of existence, moral laws, and institutions which have an absolute value, since the society in question could not subsist without them. As soon as this value is called in question, or doubt enters men's minds, the society is condemned to an early death.

The truths just enunciated may be inculcated without fear, for they are among those which no science can contest. Contrary language can only bring about the most disastrous consequences. The philosophic Nihilism, propagated at the present day by authorised voices among weak minds, induces them to believe at once in the absolute injustice of our social system and in the absurdity of all monarchies, inspires them with a hatred of all that exists, and leads them directly to socialism and anarchism. Modern statesmen are too persuaded of the influence of institutions and too little of the influence of ideas. And yet science shows them that the former are always the offspring of the latter, and have never been able to subsist without leaning on

them as a foundation. Ideas represent the invisible springs of things. When they have disappeared the underlying supports of constitutions and civilisations are destroyed. It was always a redoubtable moment for a people when its old ideas descended into the sombre necropolis where the dead gods repose.

Going on from the causes to study the effects, it has to be admitted that visible decadence seriously threatens the vitality of the majority of the great European nations, and especially of those known as the Latin nations, and really Latin nations, if not as regards their blood, at least as regards their traditions and education. Every day they are losing their initiative, their energy, their will, and their capacity to act. The satisfaction of perpetually growing material wants tends to become their sole ideal. The family is breaking up, the social springs are strained. Discontent and unrest are spreading to all classes, from the richest to the poorest. Like the ship that has lost its compass, and strays as chance and the winds direct, the modern man wanders at haphazard through the spaces formerly peopled by the gods and rendered a desert by science. He has lost his faith, and with it his hopes. The masses,



grown excessively impressionable and changeable, and no longer kept in check by any barrier, seem fated to oscillate without intermission between the wildest anarchy and the most oppressive despotism. Words will turn their heads, but their divinities of a day are soon their victims. In appearance they seem ardently to desire liberty; in reality they will have none of it, and they are incessantly appealing to the State to forge them chains. They yield blind obedience to the obscurest sectaries, to the most narrow-minded despots. The rhetoricians who imagine they lead the masses, but who most often follow them, confound the impatience and nervousness that find vent in an incessant desire for a change of master with the true spirit of independence that girds against any master whatever. The State, whatever be the nominal *régime*, is the divinity towards which all parties turn. It is the State that is appealed to for regulations and protection, every day more oppressive, that surround the most trivial acts of existence with the most Byzantine and tyrannical formalities. The younger generations are more and more disposed to renounce careers demanding judgment, initiative, energy, personal efforts, and will. The slightest responsibility alarms them. They are content with



the mediocre prospects offered them by State-paid employment. The commercial classes ignore the colonies, which are solely peopled by functionaries.<sup>1</sup> Energy and action have been replaced among statesmen by terribly empty personal discussions, in the case of the masses by passing enthusiasms or hatreds, in the case of men of letters by a sort of tearful, vague, and unfruitful sentimentalism, and by colourless dissertations on the miseries of existence. A boundless egoism is developing on all sides. The individual is coming to be solely preoccupied with himself. Consciences are capitulating, and morality

<sup>1</sup> In a speech pronounced in the Chamber of Deputies on November 27, 1890, by M. Etienne, at the time Under Secretary for the Colonies, I note the following very characteristic passage, which I borrow from the newspaper *Le Siècle* :—

"Cochin China has 1,800,000 inhabitants; of this number 1,600 are Frenchmen, 1,200 of whom are functionaries. The country is administered by a colonial council elected by these 1,200 functionaries. It has a Deputy. And you are surprised that anarchy reigns in the country! (Exclamations and laughter on a great number of benches.)

"... Are you aware what is the outcome of such a system? Its outcome is this phenomenon, that nine millions out of a budget reduced to twenty-two millions is absorbed by the expenses in connection with the functionaries.

"Yes, in 1877, I tried to reduce the number of functionaries. I reduced the expenses by 3,500,000 francs out of a total of nine millions. I took this measure in the month of October. In December the Cabinet of which I was a member was overthrown, and in the following March the functionaries I had suppressed were reinstated."

is deteriorating and gradually dying out.<sup>1</sup> The individual is losing all empire over himself. He can no longer govern himself, and the man who cannot govern himself must inevitably come before long to be governed by others.

<sup>1</sup> This lowering of morality is serious when observed in professions such as the magistracy and the profession of notary, in which honesty used to be as general as courage among soldiers. As regards the notaries morality has at present descended to a very low level. The official statisticians affirm "that among notaries there is a proportion of 43 accused persons out of 10,000 individuals, whereas the average for the whole population of France is *one* accused person for the same number of individuals." In a report addressed to the President of the Republic by the Minister of Justice and published in the *Journal Officiel*, January 31, 1890, I find the following passage: "The disasters which as early as 1840 had begun to inspire the public with uneasiness increased progressively to such a degree that in 1876 one of my predecessors had to call the special attention of the magistrates to the situation of the notaries. The dismissal of notaries and notarial catastrophes were occurring with unaccustomed frequency and under circumstances of great gravity. The number of disasters rose successively from 31 in 1882 to 41 in 1883, to 54 in 1884, to 71 in 1886, and the total embezzlements committed by notaries amounted to 62,000,000 francs for the period between 1880 and 1886. Finally, in 1889, 103 notaries were dismissed or obliged to give up their practice." If we connect with these facts the successive ruin of our most important financial enterprises (the Comtoir d'Escompte, the Dépôts et Comptes Courants, Panama, etc.), it can only be admitted that the invectives of the Socialists against the morality of the leading classes are not without foundation. The same symptoms of demoralisation are unfortunately to be observed among all the Latin peoples. The scandal of the Italian State banks, in which robbery was practised on an immense scale by politicians of the foremost rank, the bankruptcy of Portugal, the wretched financial situation of Spain and Italy, the profound decadence of the Latin republics of America, prove that the character and morality of certain peoples have sustained incurable injury, and that their rôle in the world is nearly at an end.

To change all this would be a hard task. It would be necessary to change first of all our lamentable Latin education. It is fatal to any initiative and energy that heredity may have spared. It extinguishes every gleam of intellectual independence by giving young people as their sole ideal hateful examinations, which, as they only demand efforts of the memory, place in the front rank of our professions intelligences whose servile aptitude for imitation is the negation of all individuality and all personal efforts. "I try to pour iron into the soul of my pupils," said an English schoolmaster to Guizot, when he was visiting the schools of Great Britain. Where among the Latin nations are the schoolmasters or the programmes capable of realising such an ambition? The military *régime* will perhaps realise it. In any case it is the sole educator that is capable of realising it. One of the principal conditions of improvement for decadent peoples is the organisation of a very severe universal military service and the permanent menace of disastrous wars.

It is to this general lowering of character, to the powerlessness of the citizens to govern themselves and to this egoistic indifference, that is more especially due the difficulty experienced by the majority



of the Latin peoples in living under liberal laws as far removed from despotism as from anarchy. It is easily understandable that such laws should be little to the liking of the masses, for Cæsarism holds out to them the promise if not of liberty, on which they do not set much store, at any rate of a very considerable measure of equality in servitude. On the other hand, it would be incomprehensible that republican institutions should encounter most opposition from the enlightened classes, but for the necessity of taking into account the weight of ancestral influences. Is it not with such institutions that all forms of superiority, and intellectual superiority in particular, have most chance of being able to display themselves? It might even be said that the only real objection to such institutions, from the point of view of those who stand out for equality at any price, is the fact that they favour the formation of powerful intellectual aristocracies. The most oppressive of *régimes*, on the contrary, both for character and for the intelligence, is Cæsarism in its various forms. All that can be said for it is that it facilitates equality in degradation and humility in servitude. It is well adapted to the inferior minds of decadent peoples, and that is why they always revert to it as soon as



they are able. The plume of the first general that comes along will be made the excuse for its adoption. When a people has reached this pass its hour has struck, its destiny is accomplished.

At the present hour this old-time Cæsarism, which history has always seen appear at the earliest dawn of civilisations and at their extreme decadence, is undergoing a manifest evolution. To-day we are witnessing its resurrection under the name of Socialism. This new expression of State absolutism will assuredly be the most grievous form of Cæsarism, because, being impersonal, it will escape all the motives of fear that keep the worst tyrants under restraint.

Socialism appears to-day to be the gravest of the dangers that threaten the European peoples. It will doubtless complete a decadence for which many causes are paving the way, and it will perhaps mark the end of Western civilisation.

To appreciate its dangers and its strength, it is not the teachings it spreads abroad that must be considered, but the devotion it inspires. Socialism will soon constitute the new faith of the suffering masses whose existence is often and inevitably rendered far from enviable by the economic conditions of con-

temporary civilisation. It will be the new religion that will people the empty heavens. For all the human creatures who cannot support misery unrelieved by illusion this religion will replace the luminous paradise of which the painted windows of the churches spoke to them in the past. This great religious entity of to-morrow sees the crowd of its faithful increase every day. It will soon have its martyrs, and it will then become one of those religious creeds which stir up peoples, and whose power over souls is absolute.

That the dogmas of Socialism lead to a *régime* of degrading slavery which will destroy all initiative and all independence in the souls bowed beneath its empire is doubtless evident, but only for psychologists acquainted with the condition of man's existence. Such foresight is beyond the reach of the masses. They require arguments of a different order to persuade them, and these arguments have never been furnished by reason.

That the new dogmas we see coming into being are contrary to the most elementary good sense is also evident. But were not the religious dogmas that have guided men during so many centuries also contrary to good sense, and has the fact hindered

them from subjecting the most luminous geniuses to their laws? In the matter of his beliefs man only hearkens to the unconscious voice of his sentiments. They form an obscure domain from which reason has always been excluded.

In consequence and by the mere fact of the mental constitution created them by a long past, the peoples of Europe will be obliged to undergo the redoubtable phase of Socialism. It will be the signal for their entry on one of the last stages of decadence. By causing civilisation to revert to wholly inferior forms of evolution, it will facilitate the destructive invasions by which we are threatened.

Outside Russia, whose population from the psychological point of view is much more Asiatic than European, the English would seem to be almost the only race in Europe possessing sufficient energy, stable enough beliefs, and a sufficiently independent character to avoid succumbing to the new religion the birth of which we are witnessing. Modern Germany, in spite of deceptive appearances of prosperity, will doubtless be its first victim, judging from the success of the various sects that abound within its frontiers. The Socialism that will prove its ruin will doubtless be couched in strictly scientific



formulae, of value at the best for an ideal society such as humanity will never produce, but this latest child of pure reason will be more intolerant and more redoubtable than all its elders. No people is so well prepared as Germany to accept its yoke. No people of the present age has more entirely lost its initiative, its independence, and the habit of self-government.<sup>1</sup>

As to Russia, it has evolved too recently from the *régime* of the "mir," that is to say, from primitive Communism, the most perfect form of Socialism, to return to this inferior stage of evolution. It has other destinies. It is doubtless Russia that will one day furnish the irresistible flood of barbarians destined to destroy the old civilisations of the West, whose end will have been led up to by economic struggles and Socialism.

This hour, however, has not struck as yet. To

<sup>1</sup> The most eminent German writers are perfectly agreed on this point. In his recent book on the Social Question, Herr T. Ziegler, professor at the University of Strasbourg, expresses himself as follows:—

"While 'Self-help' is the dominant tendency in England, recourse to the State is the characteristic of Germany. We are a people that for centuries has been accustomed to be under a guardian. Moreover, during the last twenty years, the strong arm of Bismarck, by assuring us security, has caused us to lose the sentiment of responsibility and initiative. It is for this reason that in difficult and even in easy cases we appeal for the aid and protection of the State, and abandon ourselves to its initiative."



reach it we have still to traverse certain phases. Socialism will be too oppressive a *régime* to last. It will make people regret the age of Tiberius and Caligula and will bring back that age. One sometimes asks how the Romans of the time of the emperors so easily supported the wild ferocity of certain despots. The reason is that they too had traversed social struggles, civil wars, and proscriptions, and the experience had cost them their character. They had come to consider these tyrants as the ultimate instruments of their salvation. They put up with everything from them, because they did not know how to replace them. The truth is they cannot be replaced. After them came the final catastrophe brought about by the barbarians. History always turns in the same circle.

## CHAPTER II

### GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

WE have already remarked, in the Introduction to this work, that it was merely a short summary, a sort of synthesis of the volumes we have devoted to the history of civilisations. Each of the chapters composing it should be regarded as the conclusion arrived at by anterior investigations. It is very difficult in consequence to still further condense ideas so condensed already. I shall attempt, however, for the benefit of readers whose time is precious, to present in the guise of very brief propositions the fundamental principles which represent the philosophy of this work.

A race possesses psychological characteristics almost as fixed as its physical characteristics. Like the anatomic species, the psychological species is

only transformed as the result of the accumulations of ages.

To the fixed and hereditary psychological characteristics, whose association forms the mental constitution of a race, are adjoined, as in the case of all anatomic species, accessory elements created by diverse modifications of the environment. Being incessantly renewed they endow a race with a certain measure of apparent variability.

The mental constitution of a race represents not only the synthesis of the living beings which compose it, but more particularly that of all the ancestors who have contributed to its formation. It is not the living but the dead who play the preponderating rôle in the existence of a people. They are the creators of its morality and the unconscious sources of its conduct.

The very great anatomic differences which distinguish the various human races are accompanied by not less considerable psychological differences. When only the average representatives of each race are compared, the mental differences often appear somewhat slight. They become immense as soon as the comparison is instituted between the most elevated elements of each race. It is then found that what

more especially differentiates superior from inferior races is the fact that the former possess a certain number of highly developed minds, whereas the latter possess no such minds.

The individuals of which inferior races are composed display a manifest equality between one another. In proportion as races rise in the scale of civilisation, their members tend to become more and more differentiated. The inevitable effect of civilisation is to differentiate individuals and races. In consequence peoples are not progressing towards equality but towards a growing inequality.

The life of a people and all the manifestations of its civilisation are merely the reflection of its soul, the visible signs of something invisible but very real. Exterior events are only the apparent surface of the hidden framework by which they are determined.

It is neither chance nor exterior circumstances, and still less political institutions, that play the fundamental rôle in the history of a people. It is more especially the character of a people that fashions its destiny.

The various elements of the civilisation of a people being only the outward signs of its mental



constitution, the expression of certain modes of feeling and thinking peculiar to a people, these elements cannot be transmitted unchanged to peoples of a different mental constitution: all that can be transmitted is the exterior, superficial, and unimportant forms.

The profound differences existing between the mental constitutions of the various peoples result in these peoples viewing the world in very dissimilar lights. The consequence is that they feel, reason and act in very different ways, and they therefore find, when they come in contact, that they are in disagreement on all questions. Most of the wars that take up so large a portion of history are the outcome of these dissentiments. Wars of conquest, wars of religion, wars of dynasties, have always in reality been wars of races.

An agglomeration of men of different origin do not form a race, do not possess, that is, a collective soul, until, as the result of interbreeding continued during centuries, and of a similar existence under identical conditions, the agglomeration has acquired common sentiments, common interests, and common beliefs.

Among civilised peoples there are scarcely any

natural races, but only artificial races created by historical conditions.

Changes of environment only influence profoundly new races, that is, mixtures of old races whose ancestral characteristics have become dissociated by cross breeding. Heredity is the only force powerful enough to struggle against heredity. Changes of environment have only a destructive action on races the fixity of whose characteristics has not been affected by cross breeding. An ancient race perishes rather than undergo the transformations requisite to enable it to adapt itself to a new environment.

The acquisition of a solidly constituted collective soul marks the apogee of the greatness of a people. The dissociation of this soul always marks the hour of its decadence. The intervention of foreign elements constitutes one of the surest means of this dissociation being compassed.

Like anatomic species, psychological species are subject to the action of time. They too are fated to grow old and die out. Always very slow in being formed, it is possible for them on the contrary to disappear rapidly. It suffices to trouble profoundly the functioning of their organs to cause them to under-

go retrograde transformations whose consequence is often their prompt destruction. Peoples are centuries long in acquiring a certain mental constitution, which they sometimes lose in a very short space of time. The ascending path which leads them to a high level of civilisation is always very long, while the decline which leads them to decadence is most often very rapid.

Together with character, ideas should be accounted one of the principal factors in the evolution of a civilisation. They do not exert an influence until, after a very slow evolution, they have been transformed into sentiments and have come in consequence to form part of the character. They are then unaffected by argument, and take a very long time to disappear. Each civilisation is the outcome of a small number of universally accepted fundamental ideas.

Religious ideas are among the most important of the guiding ideas of a civilisation. The majority of historical events have been due indirectly to the variation of religious beliefs. The history of humanity has always run parallel to that of its gods. Such is the power of these children of our dreams that even this name cannot be changed without the whole



world being thrown at once into confusion. The birth of new gods has always marked the dawn of a new civilisation, and their disappearance has always marked its decline.







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